

HOMEBOUND

An Exploration of Designed Emotive Objects
as Creators of a Movable Home.



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ABSTRACT

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The notion of Home is universally understood, but has deeply personal and specific meaning for each of us. The reality of Home however, is shifting. Our relationship with it has altered considerably in recent decades. We no longer make a single transition from childhood home to marital or adult home, as our grandparents or even our parents did. We live in a time when significant advances in technology, communication and travel, have provided us with increased opportunity and mobility. We move city and country for work, love and experience. We make lives in rented apartments, hotels, short-term houses and shared rooms. This has left us with a wavering and less concrete version of home, one that is either 'left behind' in the childhood home or takes on a makeshift nomadic form. This thesis aims to explore how a transient way of living might become more grounded and well balanced through the consideration of Home as a collection of objects, rather than a place. When we experience an impermanent-ly located life, our things become our constants, anchoring us to the buildings and spaces in which we dwell. This work explores that idea through theoretical research in the fields of anthropology, psychology and thing theory and with the overall perspective of object design. It also explores the topic through a practical design process. The ultimate aim being to create objects that heighten emotive connection to place and which trigger a kind of psychological 'at-home-ness' for the user. This process considers the emotional life of objects. Much has been written about the power of architecture to promote wellbeing and to create connection. This work propose that objects can provide equally powerful connections to place and in a more mobile world, are more practical and accessible talismans of comfort and bonding. Nowadays, we are less likely to have control over the spaces, houses and buildings in which we live, but we can more easily control our things, and through them, the spaces we inhabit.

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II

“Life begins well. It begins enclosed,
protected, all warm in the bosom
of the house.”

Gaston Bachelard

INTRODUCTION

From the day that I was bundled home from the hospital as a baby until the day I left home at 18, my family has moved house roughly every two years. As a child I could feel the move coming. Previously ignored repairs would be carried out, the house would become exceptionally spotless, there would be fresh flowers, and every lamp would be glowing. We would pile into the car for aimless family drives while an estate agent gave prospective buyers a tour of our home. Then the sold sign would go up, we would pack up the boxes and a large truck would come and haul our boxed up life to our next home. There was no impetus for us to move, my parents just enjoyed it, the possibilities and adventures of a blank canvas and a clean slate.

Their 'itchy feet' meant that the place I called home changed repeatedly while I was growing up. Throughout my early life, I watched the process of 'home-making' play out again and again, in houses and spaces of all shapes and sizes. Of course it helped when the walls were painted and the place was clean and furnished. But the thing that shaped our home anew was the reintroduction of those familiar home objects that appeared in every new place that we lived. There was a large ceramic pig wearing a white vest and trousers, a square faced clock, a wooden desk with 'make love not war' painted on the side by a youthfully idealistic aunt, stacks of books, well-used dinner plates and cutlery and timeworn bed linen. There were vases and rugs and cushions and paintings which, when they came together in whatever altered configuration would signal that this new place was home. That roughly biennial packing and unpacking of all our possessions became

a ritual for us. The idea of objects creating an 'emotional space' is one that underpins my understanding of home growing up. The view presented in this thesis echoes those childhood experiences. This perspective has allowed me to see the home as a more flexible space, transportable but constant.

The constant focus of this thesis is 'Home'. In particular, home as a psychological and emotive experience. Home is a familiar word with an objective and collectively understood meaning, but with a personal and subjective association for each of us. Home as a space is one of the most deeply connective and expressive. Gaston Bachelard said "our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word." (1994, p4). Home is a deeply entrenched and relatable idea to most of us. It is our safe place and our retreat from the world; it is our envelope for living. That said, fewer and fewer of us are living in places where we truly feel at home. Our world has changed rapidly in recent decades. Ease of travel and improved communication technology have afforded us the opportunity to leave our homelands behind in pursuit of work, love and new experiences. We are living in temporary places; rented apartments, borrowed spaces, Air Bnbs and even hotels. For many, this impermanent lifestyle has created a transitory feeling of displacement. We may be living in a city for years, but the knowledge that we will eventually move on to a 'real' home, stops us from buying property, painting walls, investing in furniture or embarking on construction. This all takes away some of the control that we feel over our home spaces.



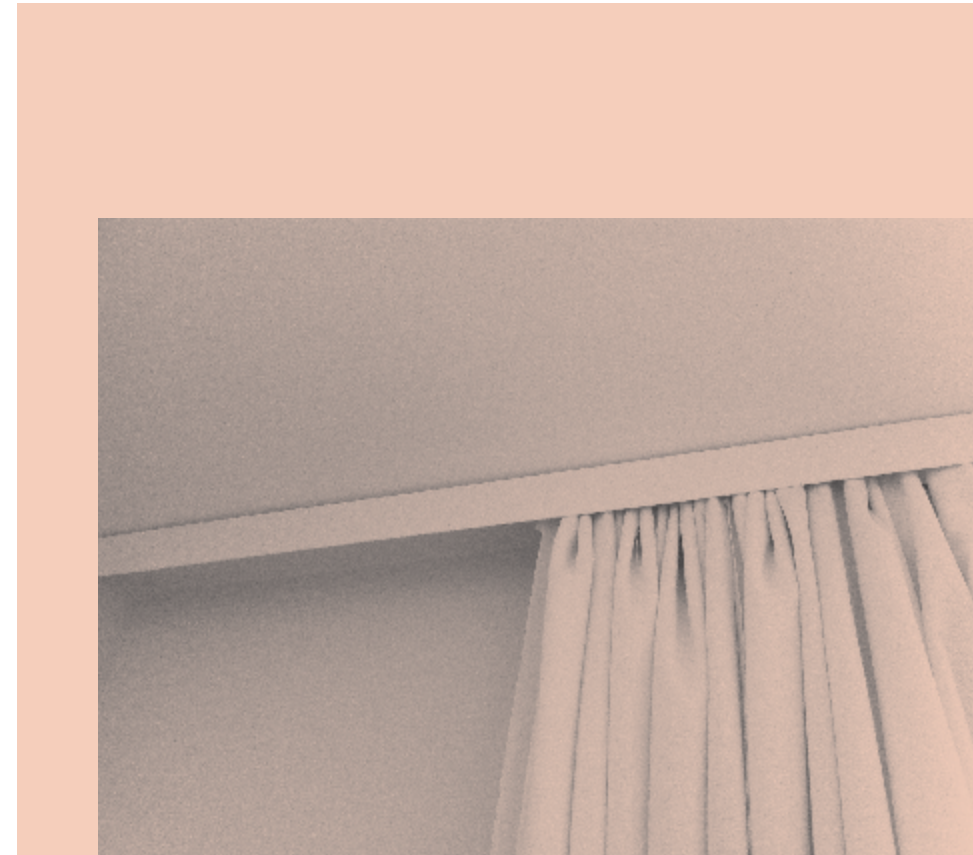
Fig. 2; The Home becomes more than bricks and mortar.

This theme evolved, initially, from an unsettled feeling of longing for home that I experienced during my first year in Helsinki. Because of the constant moving when I was younger, the home that I was missing didn't physically exist. So what was I pining for? I felt ungrounded and unattached to where I was living. What I was in fact missing was the feeling of home rather than a specific physical place. This began my thoughts about our need for home, and what that actually means. Home can be defined in many ways depending on personal situation and experience, but I began to see it as an emotional anchor point in the world. It is our 'base camp'. It should be somewhere that provides a sense of belonging, ownership, privacy, retreat and opportunity for self-expression. And when the architectural space, which swathes that home, is out of our control, home becomes a construction of the objects populating it.

Shelter is a basic physical necessity, but home goes beyond what is necessary for survival. It should speak about our need for wellbeing, mental health and happiness. Home is the place that we can rest from our workday lives and public selves, express ourselves most freely and be with our loved ones. Our childhood homes are formative and become part of who we are, in turn our adult homes are formed around us as we occupy them. How can the benefits of feeling 'at home' be attainable, movable and adaptable to suit a new more mobile way of living? One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, and one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily, with a place on the planet that belongs to us, and to which we belong.

This thesis endeavors to see beyond the basic functions of home as a shelter and a functional domestic space. It endeavors to think about how as object makers we can consider the emotional impact, on the home and its occupants, that the objects we make have. The hope is to clarify my own thinking about this fundamental question of improving one of the most personal spaces in our lives. And to begin to answer, through my own work, the question of how we can satisfy human needs and emotional wellbeing through the objects we design.

TWO



About Home

The Unsettled and The Migratory

Home & Self

ABOUT HOME

This section discusses generally the idea of 'Home' and what it means for us. Home, as a concept, is so profoundly engrained in our society and our idea of ourselves that it should be acknowledged as one of our most defining driving forces. As human beings, our compulsion to inhabit, settle and dwell, is undeniable. This sentiment is echoed by Charles Moore in his foreword for Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's 'In Praise of Shadows' "One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, and one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily, with a place on the planet which belongs to us, and to which we belong." (1977, foreword) Martin Heidegger proposed that our need to dwell and our need to build are fundamentally linked. He is quoted by Peter Zumthor as Saying "The relationship of man to places and through places to spaces is based on his dwelling in them." (2006, p34) Edwin Heathcote describes the etymological relations between the two concepts "The German word for building, bauen, and the English word being share the same root. (...) To build, it seems, is to be." (2012, p8) This thesis will question whether this need to dwell is necessarily dependent on building or is it enough to populate a space with our selves and our 'things'?

So, it could be said that to be human is to dwell. To chose not to dwell, or to elect to live a life of homelessness is to step outside the social norms, and is often seen as choosing to opt out of society as a whole. Generally, "we fear the idea of homelessness, it means a life on the streets, of not having a place to sleep, to eat, to be." (Heathcote, 2012, p7). This combination of longing and fear places home, as shelter, high on the human priority list. Maslow puts it just below our need for nourishment and sleep. (Maslow, 1943, p372)

But how does a home differ from a dwelling or shelter? Our idea of home is a primal yet complex notion, and one intensely interwoven with our idea of self. It ties our ancient Neanderthal selves to our 'modern selves', the primal to the self-aware. It connects function and feeling, physical needs with psychological needs. Those fierce territorial arguments with neighbors regarding overhanging hedges and boundary lines reveal our lingering primordial obsession with territory, to be owned and protected. While, simultaneously, our age of self-awareness means that we see the home as a place that answers our emotional needs of psychological well-being and self-actualisation.

In his work "The Prehistory of Home" archaeologist Jerry D. Moore provides a historical context for the idea of home. "Various animals build shelters, but only humans build homes. We have done this for millennia." He continues, "We have been building homes longer than we have been Homo sapiens. I have mapped open-air encampments and rock shelters of hunters and gatherers (...) from 4500 B.C. to A.D. 1800." (2012, p6) We know the shelter is ancient, a concept built over time to satisfy our ever-changing needs, from cave dwellers, to inhabitants of modernist architectural glass boxes. What is interesting about Moore's description of ancient and prehistoric human dwellings is that they more closely resemble our understanding of home rather than shelter. It is also true that many of the minutiae of his descriptions of ancient homes remain as true today as they did thousands of years ago.



Fig. 5

“Dwellings are powerful and complex concentrates of human existence. More than passive backdrops to human actions, our dwellings reflect and shape our lives (...) Dwellings enclose social groups of various sizes, from single individuals to entire religious communities. Houses vary in size, permanence, symbolic valence, functions, and so on, reflecting the varieties of the domestic experience. Our homes provide shelter and they express our identities.” (Moore, 2012, p3)

The Etymology of the word home also provides us with some insight into the human perception of the idea as distinct from shelter. Home originates from the Old English *hām*, and relates to Old Frisian (Dutch) *heem* and Proto-Germanic *heim*. *Hām* referred to a collection of buildings, what we might now refer to as a homestead. Old Norse *heimr* refers to the idea of ‘residing’ in the world. The Proto Indo Europeo **tkei* meant to settle or dwell. While it’s Sanskrit source, has a meaning closer to the modern English ‘home’, signifying an abode or safe and secure refuge. It has also been suggested my etymologists that the Irish word *cóim* “pleasing; pleasant.” provides an etymological source which encapsulates the more sentimental connotations of the idea.

In modern English we understand a home as an intimate space. A house is someone else’s but a home is our own. It is tied up with the personal: memory, identity and nostalgia. We carry within us an invisible tether to home as a symbolic safe place, a ‘base camp’ in a daunting wider world. In his book ‘Objects of Desire’ Adrian Forty states ‘the home, as well as providing shelter, is also an icon,’ (1986, p94) This is a sentiment often repeated when discussing home, the idea that the simple bricks and mortar from which it is built are imbued with abundant meaning. For many people, across various cultures, this meaning is a shared and profound

association with warmth, safety, love and nurturing. There is a sense of transporting otherness to this most private and personal sphere, which provides distance and protection from the strain of everyday life. It is more than a building; it is our safe place in the world. Philosopher Martin Buber describes the home beautifully as ‘the winning throw of the dice which man has wrested from the uncanniness of universe; it is his defense against the chaos that threatens to invade him.’ (1969, p93)

In her book ‘Home is Where the Heart is’ Ilse Crawford discusses the commonality between the home as a sanctuary and the maternal. She describes this strong psychological connection “This association of home with mother, with refuge and feeling safe, is so deep rooted we never truly shed it.” She goes on to describe how, “The home becomes in many ways our surrogate contact mother, our place to retreat to and the one that gives us courage to venture out.” (2005, p23) This connection between home and our childhood self, or childhood experience, profoundly shapes our adult idea of home and often shapes our homes themselves. “Homes are also, of course, made of memories. Our childhood homes colour our perception of every subsequent space we inhabit and they condition our responses, either encouraging us to recreate the rooms of our pasts or to react against them.” (Heathcote, 2012, p18)

We create deep connections to the places we call home. The associations permeate our senses, not only is there a visual recognition of home but the unique sounds and smells of our own homes become deeply familiar. Shaped by cooking, perfumes, detergents, time and materials, mingled together over time in a subtly unique blend. Heathcote discusses this “heightened sensitivity of awareness about our own homes in which things feel right or wrong. We can detect the

slightest changes, feel when something is not right. Our bond with our homes can be quite extraordinary” (2012, p20). These associations become triggers for memory, as our homes replay to us all that they have witnessed, as they serve as the backdrops to our lives. To quote Heathcote again, our homes become “receptacles of both personal and collective memory, containers of meaning and symbol, as theatrical sets against which the dramas of our lives are enacted.” (2012, p22) The profundity of this connection feels quite out of reach of the designer’s grasp. It seems almost impossible to purposefully influence this complex relationship. Gaston Bachelard lamented similarly when he said, “the related problems are many if we want to determine the profound reality of all the subtle shadings of our attachment for a chosen spot” (1994, p4).

When it is not attached to a particular individual, home is a functional domestic space. We understand it as a home, even when it is not our own. It speaks to us, through its colors and lighting and furniture, about how it should be used. It tells us through its appearance and aesthetic, what should happen there and through its atmosphere, what it should make us feel. Adrian Forty stated, “The appearance of its contents makes evident what it is and what people are meant to do, and not do, in it.” (1986, p96). Home, and domestic spaces in general, possess a specific visual language which signals to us that it is a space of leisure, not work. These visual symbols of domesticity capture the charm and comfort of homeliness in a less personal or specific way. This more general aesthetic is something within the grasp of the designers work. Colour, material, texture and symbolism become vital tools in designing ‘home-making objects’.

Some of the early enthusiasts of the beauty and romanticism of domesticity were the Dutch and Flemish painters of 17th century.

During the Dutch Golden Age of painting, artists and their patrons began to turn to the home life of the middle classes as inspiration for their work. Painters like Pieter de Hooch, Nicolaes Maes and Johannes Vermeer typically dealt with these familial scenes of everyday life within the Dutch home. Holland was a relatively urbanized country at the time and much of the men’s work had moved outside the home. The domestic house became the focus of private family life, a female sphere of housework and child rearing. Their paintings extolled the virtues of a humble, and moral, home life. They depicted unpretentious domestic scenes in modest houses, and often used the subject of the lady of the house or a female servant cleaning or caring for children. “In domestic scenes (...) the intention was almost always exemplary; these were representations of virtuous behavior which remind us that homes were not just physical places but also the centre of society’s moral instruction.” (Vergara, Westermann & Sufield, 2003, p103). Today we are still depicting the virtuous domestic life in popular culture. Innumerable TV shows and magazines, not to mention sites like Pinterest, labour over the subject. These contemporary depictions of domesticity have perhaps become more entwined with status than morality. Regardless, programmes like *Grand Designs* and *Magazine’s* like *Architectural Digest*, follow in the footsteps of Vermeer and de Hooch, by presenting idealized and ‘exemplary’ portraits celebrating domestic life.

This section provides a theoretical overview and a basic understanding of the importance and impact of home on our daily lives and our emotional selves. It begins the thinking on a number of aspects of ‘the home’, the threads of which will be picked up in the following chapters. It is intended to provide the reader with the initial thoughts and an insight into the approach of this thesis.

THE UNSETTLED
& THE MIGRATORY



Fig. 6; Bedoun Tent

To provide some context, or a possible user group for this thinking, we look to the many millions of people living 'away from home'. For the purpose of this thesis I will limit these to what are sometimes called existential or voluntary migrants. That is, those who have chosen to depart their homeland for reasons of career, experience, love etc. This thesis will not address the very real crisis surrounding refugees or displaced people. This a wholly more profound issue, which cannot be addressed in a sufficient way within the limitations of this thesis.

Compared to even a decade or two ago, the very nature and idea of home has shifted, with many of us living outside our native lands in temporary and transient ways. Affordability and ease of travel have loosened our tethers to home. But, it has primarily been advances in communication, which have catalyzed these changes in human mobility. The Internet has created a social and professional digital space without borders, which have in turn provided opportunity for physical movement between countries and across continents.

The term 'Existential Migrant' was coined by Greg Madison (2006) in his article 'Existential Analysis'. This term refers to those who "Rather than migrating in search of employment, career advancement, or overall improved economic conditions, (...) voluntary migrants are seeking greater possibilities for self-actualising, exploring foreign cultures in order to assess their own identity, and ultimately grappling with issues of home and belonging in the world generally." (p238) Other terms such as 'Global Nomads', 'Ex-pats', 'World-citizens' or 'Third Culture Kids' provide some parameters within which to study, from a design perspective, those who have chosen to leave their homes in search of an alternative lifestyle or experience.

In the past and often still today, this impermanent and unsettled way of living was viewed as unhealthy and detrimental to ones happiness. In his book A Pattern Language, Christopher Alexander (1977) states "People cannot be genuinely comfortable and healthy in a house which is not theirs. All forms of rental-whether from private landlords or public housing agencies - work against the natural processes, which allow people to form stable, self-healing communities." (p393) Since it's publication in 1977, the idea of community has become deeply evolved through the Internets facilitation of alternative real world communities, online communities and social media societies. Perhaps there is a certain satisfaction and restfulness in the feeling that a place is truly our own. But, this in a way is moot, as the people that make up this vast new population of voluntary migrants have chosen the alternative. And so it is their needs that we must now address through design.

In his TED talk 'Where is Home?' Pico Iyer (2003) describes the vastness of what he calls "this great floating tribe". He states

"The number of people living in countries not their own now comes to 220 million, and that's an almost unimaginable number (...) And the number of us who live outside the old nation-state categories is increasing so quickly, by 64 million just in the last 12 years, that soon there will be more of us than there are Americans. Already, we represent the fifth-largest nation on Earth."

This enormous and expanding group challenges us as designers to reconsider what home is when it is 'removed from itself'. And, what people need and do not need to feel settled, comfortable and 'at home' in a new or perhaps ever changing place.

It is affecting to consider the deeply altered view of, and relationship with, 'Home' that these new nomads will have. In his study of 'Existential Migrants' Madison (2006) was also struck by this implication. He states "The conceptual ramifications of this new understanding of voluntary migration is found in the definition of 'home as interaction' rather than the usual 'home as place'" (p238). This very idea of 'home as interaction' in opposition to the traditional view of home as a geographical place or space, is at the very core of the philosophy of this thesis. That the very feeling of 'at-home-ness' could be coaxed forth through interactions with objects and surroundings regardless of context is a fascinating and stirring thought for a designer. Madison also quotes Hayes in stating that the very act of leaving 'home' will encourage openness to new versions of home within our target group "In relation to leaving home, Hayes says '... this action itself permits the subsequent development of alternative meanings of home' (2007, p220)

So, how can we design for this new lifestyle and this new type of home? In an exhibition entitled 'Nomadismi' which explored this very topic of mobile living, the exhibitors described their intention in their supporting text "now that communication technology has made us wireless and has set us free, we realise that we do not need anymore a desk or an office and are able to completely reinvent our existence and environment. Borders of working time and leisure time are fading as we decide on our own time-tables and priorities. We are free of time and space, free to roam and wander... To wander around the planet, in our countries and

cities, and even in our own rooms." (2013). This wandering drive however is not new; it is in fact deeply human. Nomadic tribes like the Bedouins have constructed temporary camps to shelter themselves for thousands of years. Arctic explorers ignited their oil lamps as they gathered to eat in makeshift huts. And great armies have unfolded their campaign chairs as they plotted to expand their empires. There are many designs inspired by movement and impermanence already in existence.

The provisions for modern nomads are often limited to the functional items provided for us by landlords and the offerings of that other go-to outfitter of temporary homes, IKEA. These serviceable objects usually leave us feeling nothing of the connection to home. IKEA products, though cheap and accessible, can have the effect of feeling generic and throwaway; a practice that is neither fulfilling nor environmentally friendly. So, perhaps our association with home tips the balance towards emotion rather than use. Our focus is no longer on function, but on feelings and the atmosphere evoked by objects that are conscious of phenomenological impact. But, in a domestic context how closely are our associations with these two aspects of home interwoven? This relationship between feeling and functions of the home is significant and will be explored further in later chapters.



Fig. 7

sit on the same Ikea sofa and drink from the same Ikea glasses. This affordable but homogenous plethora of home wares is convenient, but has also robbed us of some of the ability to express our individuality and personality through our homes. This is particularly true of those who are the focus of this thesis, those living in a more temporary way. For them, I believe, that the anonymity of the Ikea object does little to connect them with a space or make them feel grounded in their home. Choosing and collecting objects that engage and express something of the life of the dweller becomes more important. As stated by De Botton "Our domestic fittings too are memorials to identity." (2014, p 124)

Considering this, it is important for us to find spaces in our homes, particularly temporary homes, for objects of meaning and value. This thesis proposes that memorial objects, atmospheric objects and nostalgic objects are the most effective tools in creating a sense of at-home-ness. We benefit from surrounding ourselves with things that we feel embody something of our selves. In addition to this, there is also a widely understood language around domesticity, taste and 'things' that allows us to communicate through our possessions and our homes. Cosiness is expressed by the out of place country kitchen and electric fireplace in an urban apartment. Education and sophistication are expressed through the display of books, art and objects as cultural commodities; think Frasier Crane's Burber rug and Eames Lounge chair. Wealth can be a display of gilded showiness or it can subscribe to an understated emphasis on quality materials and historical references to status. The well-travelled homeowner displays her Turkish rugs, Indian textiles and African wooden ornaments. We can say many things through our homes, I am wealthy, I am cultured, I value my family, I have travelled, I am eccentric or I am ordinary. This topic is discussed in greater depth in the later section on Emotive Objects.

Culture is another important topic to touch on as a primary source of identity. Critically, when living outside one's homeland, culture can acquire a more heightened significance in its expression of identity and belonging. In his work 'Local Belonging, Identities and Sense of Place in Contemporary Ireland,' Tom Inglis (2011) states that "Recent research suggests that in an increasingly geographically mobile and globalised society (...) a sense of place is still a strong marker of identity and central to people's knowledge and understanding of themselves and others." (abstract). One's own culture expressed in a new home space can act as a strong tool of connection. A historical example of this is the movement of thousands of immigrants from Ireland to Nova Scotia and Northern Canada during the late 18th and early 19th century. Irish immigrants, when settling in their new Canadian home, went about recreating a translated version of Irish vernacular furniture, using cultural objects and familiarity to settle themselves there. "Usually of a utilitarian nature, these furnishings traced their ancestry to the vernacular traditions of immigrant homelands (...) Distinctive national and regional characteristics are discernible, as well as the preference of one or another national group for a specific form." (Pain, 1978, p31). Culture can be one of the most influential frameworks for living, as described in The David Report (2011)

"[Culture] embraces complex ways of living, value systems, traditions, beliefs and habits; including knowledge, morals, law and customs, acquired by those within that Society. These provide for a set of 'cultural objects', which symbolise a shared schematic experience, and which we recognise having cultural value." (p6)

Culture is an important means of self-identity and should be considered by this thesis. That said it is something infinitely specific and particular, which is difficult to address appropriately through the design of objects aimed at a broad user group. This thesis cannot address individual cultural references; it does however recognize the importance of cultural expression and will aim to facilitate this by leaving space within the objects and the spaces for that expression. The ideas of identity, self-expression, aspiration, memory and nostalgia touched upon in this section will serve as useful guidelines in the design of the final objects. The importance of the language of objects in the home, which speak as much to the occupant as their visitors, is a central concept to bear in mind as the project progresses. Edwin Heathcote (2012) writes "the very idea of home is so tied up with our selves that it can seem almost inseparable from our being." (p7) The home is a complex sphere of human expression and reflection, this thesis aims to understand this further. And through this understanding to develop an approach to the design of home objects, which provides movable, transportable and deeply connective pieces, for those living in homes for a limited duration.



THREE



Emotive Objects

Objects as Space

The Roles of Home Things

Atmosphere

Action

EMOTIVE OBJECTS

The objects surrounding us in our daily lives have the capacity to kindle deep relationships with us, particularly when they reflect back something of ourselves: our histories, our experiences or our aspirations. To my mind, nowhere is this connection between an individual and their things more palpable, than in the home. But how much of this emotion is within the reach of the designer's process?

This short section will survey existing theoretical work surrounding our rich relationship with the objects of our daily lives. It will examine how our material world exists in parallel with our emotional lives and thus our emotions become objectified by this interaction. It will look at how objects become agents of experience through our association with their presence at a particular time. The purpose of this is to provide a realistic understanding of the capabilities of the designer to impose meaning and value on the objects that they make. And, particularly in the context of this thesis, the hope is to provide the necessary design footing to produce well-considered 'home' objects, which are also open and passive enough to encourage ownership and appropriation. The aim is to realise artifacts that become a kind of sponge for meaning and that invite an amplified connection as they travel alongside their owner and bear witness. As described by Sherry Turkle (2011) "the object is a companion in life experience" (p5).

An important component of the theoretical skeleton supporting this thinking, is 'Thing Theory'. There has been a heightened interest in 'Thinghood' and material culture during recent decades. This multidisciplinary area of academic study holds significant relevance for design practice and research. A seminal thinker concerned with our relationship to 'Things' was the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger speaks, in his influential work, *Being and Time* (1996) about "the entities within the world" as Things. "Things of Nature, and Things 'invested with value.'" (p64). Although his in-depth reflections on objects vs. equipment vs. things may be beyond the scope of this thesis, there is relevance in his discussion about things as signs or visual references. And how we use these to make sense of our 'being' and experience in the world.

Heidegger's description of objects as signs could also be described as our collective understanding of the meaning of objects. "The word 'sign' designates many kinds of things: not only may it stand for different kinds of signs, but Being-a-sign-for can itself be formalized as a universal kind of relation, so that the sign-structure itself provides an ontological clue for 'characterizing' any entity whatsoever. But signs, in the first instance, are themselves items of equipment whose specific character as equipment consists of showing or indicating. We find such signs in signposts, boundary-stones, the ball for the mariners storm-warning, signals, banners, signs of mourning, and the like." (1996, p72). This collective or objective understandability is within the grasp of design practice through use of familiar collective references.



Fig. 11

In our role as designers we may attempt to provoke an objective meaningfulness in the objects that we produce. However, the end result, or the object's subjective meaning as seen through the eyes of an individual, is often beyond our control.

An important next step in understanding the human/object relationship is provided by Sherry Turkle in her book 'Evocative Objects: Things We Think With'. Which concentrates on the personal and subjective meaning ascribed to 'Things'. Turkle (2011) states, "Objects help us make our minds, reaching out to us to form active partnerships." She goes on to quote psychologist Jean Piaget in saying "From our earliest years, objects help us think about such things as number, space, time, causality and life;" (p6). Evocative Objects, that is objects assigned with symbolism and meaning, create an understanding and play an intense and vital role in the relationship between the user or owner and the object itself. These individual associations between thing and person are less accessible to the designer in terms of her ability to control them. Perhaps the Marketing and Advertising are the disciplines which have best masters this manipulation of perception.

Turkle finds the time and context during which objects enter our lives to be crucially important to the meaning that we assign to them "an object's role in a significant life transition" sees the "object serve as a marker of relationship and emotional connection." She also states "Most objects exert their holding power because of the particular moment and circumstance in which they come into the author's life." (2011, p8). She sees them as artifacts, which represent memory and deep association with our emotional lives. This theory sees us, charging objects with emotion so as to make them companions to our emotional lives and experiences.

Where Turkle perceives our personal objects as keepers of memories and sentimental attachments. Alain De Botton (2014) in his book 'The Architecture of Happiness' believes our choice of keepsakes and possessions embody more aspirational feelings rather than nostalgic ones. He states "our aim is to identify objects and decorative features which will correlate with certain salutary inner states and encourage us to foster them within ourselves." (p33). These thoughts are familiar and touch on the modern need to consume and display 'things' as

intertwined symbols of status and identity. The objects with which we associate become demonstrative symbols of our public selves and inward reminders of who we wish to be.

Mihaly Csikszentmihályi and Halton Rochberg reinforce this point in their work 'The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self', when they state "Things embody goals, make skills manifest, and shape the identities of their users. Man is not only homo sapiens or homo ludens, he is also homo faber; the maker and user of objects, his self to a large extent a reflection of things with which he interacts." (1981, p4).

It is my position that the emotive objects surrounding us can satisfy both Turkle's view of them as agents of nostalgia and De Botton's view of them as beacons of our aspirations and identity (either real or imagined). It is a familiar action, and innately human to transfer aspects of our emotional selves onto objects. And when it comes to these emotional overflows, the things around us can be infinitely absorbent "both literally and figuratively. Punching bags, calm balls, and stress balls are all ways that objects serve their absorptive function. In a figurative sense though, objects that are thrown in fits of anger; a pen that is chewed out of nervousness, pillows that are drenched with our tears or food that we consume in depression—these are all ways that our material world must absorb our interior world." (Maswoswe, 2006)

In spite of their principal function of furnishing our daily lives, it is clear that 'things' also serve as vehicles for meaning. These meanings may be designed or imposed. Regardless of how the value is attached, evocative objects carry memories and past atmosphere, they trigger nostalgia and reminders within us of who we are in our best sense and who we wish to be in our most aspirational sense. The arrangement of objects through our lives in both space and time deepens our experience and affirms our identity. As Alain De Botton (2014) so succinctly put it "Our domestic fittings too are memorials to identity." (p124)



Fig. 12/13; A look at how valuable and important objects are displayed. Plinths and physical frames are used to display marble statues at the Fondazione Prada by Rem Koolhaas.



“We find it familiar to consider objects as useful or aesthetic, as necessities or vain indulgences. We are on less familiar ground when we consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought. We think with objects we love; we love the objects we think with.”

Sherry Turkle,

OBJECTS AS SPACE

The central conceptual focus of this thesis is that it is objects, rather than buildings and space, which are the most closely linked physical manifestations of our emotional lives. And with that in mind, it argues that it is objects that provide the essential lexicon in creating that most significant emotional landscape, the home. Architecture is an essential part of our lives and our pursuit as humans; it is a collective means of shaping the world around us. The problem is that many of us do not have the individual access to control the architectural spaces within which we live. This is particularly true as we now live more transiently and temporarily. So it is objects that we must turn to in the creation of our living environments. As discussed several times throughout this thesis, it is my argument that it is objects that are the most absorptive of our emotions and memories. Their human scale is relatable and their portability makes them easy companions, accompanying us through the changing locations of our lives. It is through objects that we remember; that we demonstrate our identity and that we create atmosphere.

In his work 'The Language of Things' Deyan Sudjic (2009) laments the surge of materialism and the oversaturation of things in our homes, which is no doubt in effect in today's society. He states that things, which he calls toys, provide "consolation for the unremitting pressures of acquiring the means to buy them and which infantilize us in our pursuit of them." (p5) Certainly, caution is required when dealing with over indulgent consumerism and "the whole avalanche of products that threatens to overwhelm us." (p6) But my hope is that this thesis can focus on something different, on the lasting emotional value of relationships with things, rather than

the cheap fix of the newest toy. Our deepest relationships with objects are not the result of a materialist desire; they are because we are afraid to forget something. They are another means of storing the moments of our lives, like a photograph. We mentally assign memories and characteristics to the objects around us to be played back over time. "The fear of forgetting anything precious can trigger in us the wish to raise a structure, like a paperweight to hold down our memories." (De Botton, 2014, p123).

It seems obvious to me that an empty room can never be a home, no matter how beautifully it is constructed, how the light enters it or the materiality of the space. Alain de Botton describes "man's inability to flourish in equal measure in whatever room he is placed in." (2014, p119) I disagree with this statement, so long as his things are also in that room. Home is the result of 'curation', it is selection and introduction of objects that make it so. Belonging, atmosphere and connection appear with the object's introduction. Jasper Morrison toyed with a similar idea of objects as creators of atmospheric space. In his exhibition, 'Everything but the Walls' in Berlin in 1988, Morrison "wanted to find out the effect objects have on the atmosphere of rooms." He said "It seemed to me that the change in atmosphere of a room when an object is added might be hard to measure, but that in some way represented an invisible quality or lack of quality in the object, and that an awareness of this might be an important factor in designing things." (2002, p14) This is also my hope, that a consciousness of the emotional importance of objects within the home will have an effect on my design outcomes.

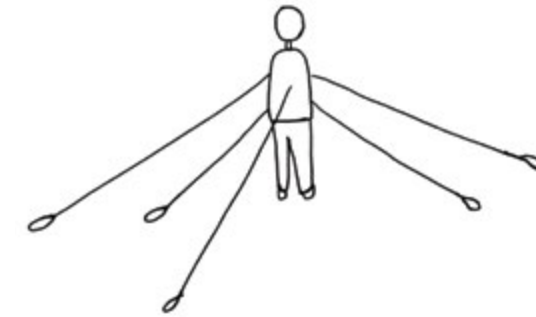


Fig. 15; Objects which are important to us provide an emotional tether effect which connects us to our homes.

In 'The Architecture of Happiness' De Botton (2014) states that "what we call a home is merely any place that succeeds in making more consistently available to us the important truths which the wider world ignores, or which our distracted and irresolute selves have trouble holding on to. As we write, so we build: to keep a record of what matters to us." (p123) I would argue that build here might be replaced with collect, we more often have the ability or opportunity to "keep a record of what matters to us" not through building homes which reflect our ideals and truths but by collecting objects which encapsulate them. Most places could be called home, if they contain what is most important to us.

De Botton states "Those places whose outlook matches and legitimates our own, we tend to honour with the term 'home'. Our homes do not have to offer us permanent occupancy or store our clothes to merit the name. To speak of home in relation to a building is simply to recognize its harmony with our own prized internal song. Home can be an airport or a library, a garden or a motorway diner." (2014, p 107) It is the argument of this thesis that particular objects within any habitable space, have the power to create a home, provided that those objects create an atmosphere and emotional connection with the inhabitant.

THE ROLES OF HOME THINGS

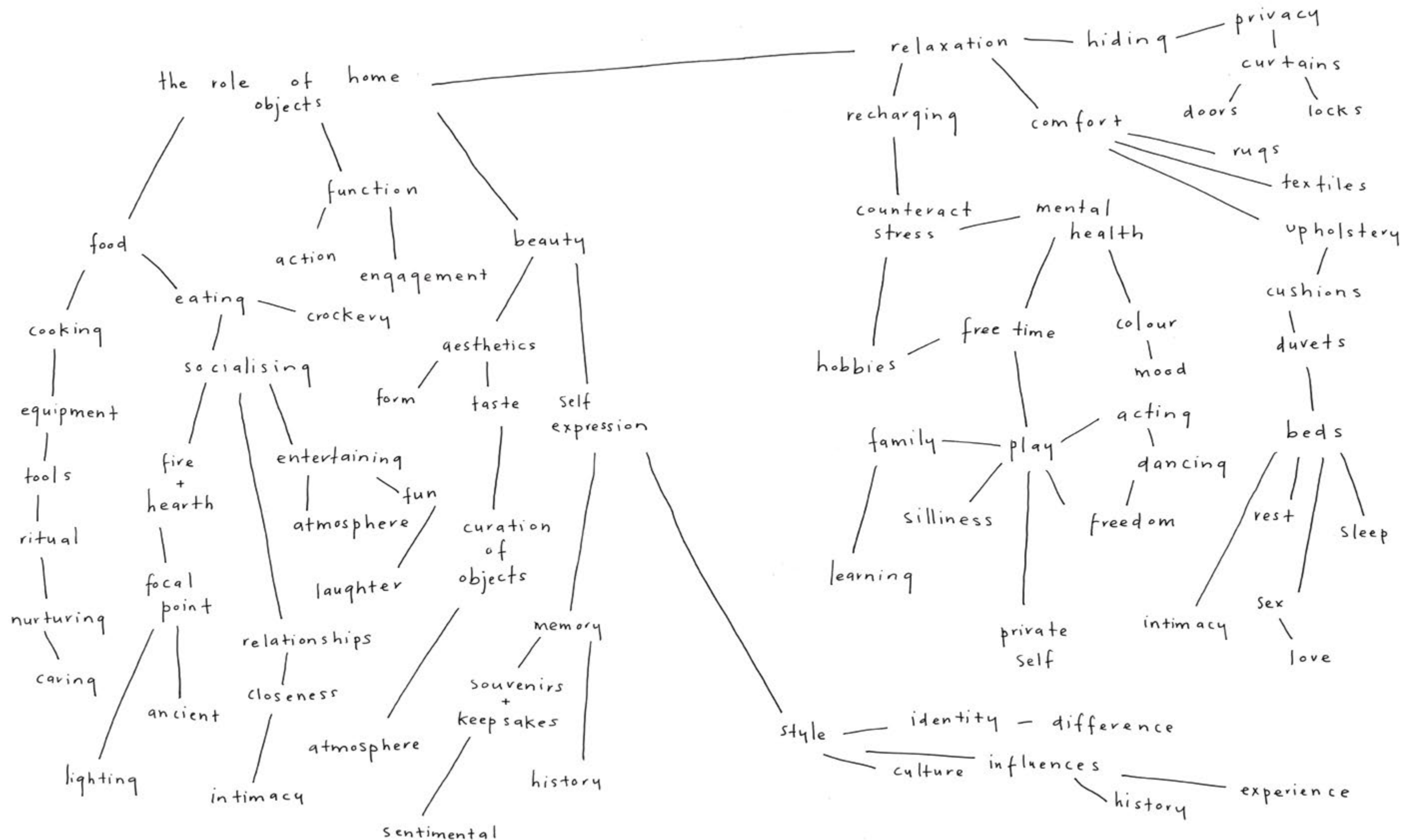
Our homes are full of things, each fulfilling a different role. When we analyse what constitutes a home, we have established that this thesis defends the view that a home is comprised primarily of objects, and that the space that they occupy, while important, is secondary. The goal with this portion of research was to identify examples of existing domestic or home objects that create that emotional connection and feeling of home, which could provide useful insight for the design process. I began this exercise by brainstorming the many activities of the home and their associated objects, with an eye on their emotional value. (see overleaf)

Through this exercise I began to identify and create an informal framework within which to organize and study those objects, and in turn the objects that I would later design. Most of these 'emotive objects' can be categorized loosely into two groups; those that engage through action and those that, through their presence alone, create a feeling, mood or atmosphere. There are some objects which fall plainly into one camp or another; there are others that tread a line between. For the purposes of this work I chose to use the definitions of 'Action' (eg. broom) and 'Atmosphere' (eg. lamp). Heidegger (1996) spoke about Equipment 'Things' and Sign 'Things'. 'Equipment' here meaning objects of use or concern, while 'Signs' hold a kind of meaning and value for the owner. It may be said that Action objects are equipment, where Atmosphere objects might be described as signs. This provides a useful and instructive tool in thinking about how we interact with the objects of our daily lives and how this experience might be deepened.

Action as a definition goes beyond function; it is a tool that facilitates our physical and psychological interaction with our home. Atmosphere inspires an emotional response in us; it is about how our home objects make us feel. Action objects create physical connection between us, and our homes, through use. These are objects such as sweeping brushes, which we use to clean, tend to and care for our homes. Atmosphere objects may be literal or charged with subjective atmosphere. For example, a frame displaying a precious memory photographed creates atmosphere for its owner, as does a particularly beautiful lamp or a flickering candlelight, though this atmosphere is more objective. The following is an exploration of these definitions and a study of their value to this process.



Fig. 16: Simple and minimalist Toaster by Muji.



ACTION

The category 'action' is about function but it is also about work and interaction. It describes the acts of engaging with and tending to the home. Under the category of 'action', domestic tools are primordial examples of objects which necessitate action and which are deeply connected to our feelings and associations with home. These are our household tools, Heidegger's 'equipment' (1996). 'Action' defines those functional objects which communicate domesticity and which connect us, through use, with our homes. Thinking about 'action' objects in the home also raises ideas of ritual. Many of the objects in this category could be described as tools of domestic ritual. Rituals are carried out daily in our homes, from cooking to setting the table for a meal, from cleaning to grooming; it is these many small goings-on that deepen our connection with home. Arranging books on a shelf, restoring the clean contents of a dishwasher back to their rightful places in the cupboard; these are the actions that give us a sense of calm control over our surroundings. Ilse Crawford describes the emotive effect of human ritual "Rituals can civilize us. Things too. They can make us behave differently and affect how we interact, what we value. A cup is not just for getting liquid inside us. It can change the way we drink, our perception of what we drink and the nature of the experiences." (2005, p144)

The activities of the kitchen are particularly ritualistic. Cooking, feeding and nourishing are model examples of homely pursuits. The daily ritual of preparing and cooking a meal, setting a table and sharing time spent eating together is a profoundly connecting and emotionally rich experience. As we eat, laugh and listen to one another, relationships are

formed and cemented, between us and with our homes. In his 2016 documentary 'Cooked' Michael Pollan described his emotional experience of home cooking. "I counted myself lucky to have a parent, my mother, who loved to cook. One image I can easily summon is of the turquoise casserole from which she ladeled out beefs stews and chicken soups. The pot symbolized the home and the family, it's lid a kind of roof over a domestic space." Particularly notable here is the image of the turquoise casserole dish, a deeply charged object which encapsulates for him; home, family, love as his experiences of being cooked for. Not a special pot, but a tool of action, which symbolized a positive experience of home.

Pure domestic tasks, like cooking, trigger for us an in-built psychological connection with ideas of domesticity and consequently of home. Tasks done with our hands, within the home, which maintain, mend and create can have a surprisingly profound bonding power. Again, in the documentary 'Cooked' Samin Nosrat, a teacher, writer and chef discusses the importance of working with our hands. "As a culture, we've just gotten so far away from these little tasks, it seems like it's getting in the way of life. But actually this is life. What better thing than to be doing the thing where your hand is in the pot, in the beans. Anything where people are actually working and doing something, making something. I think that's among the most valuable things we can do as humans." (Cooked, 2016)

The Idea of tools as active agents in home bonding is interesting and potentially useful in an attempt to create deliberate objects of human-home connection.



Fig. 17; The daily ritual of preparing and cooking a meal, setting a table and sharing time spent eating together is a profoundly connecting and emotionally rich experience.

Another area of activity where this is applicable, is cleaning. Though often considered an unpleasant task, the act of cleaning and 'taking care' of our homes can only deepen our sense of ownership and connectedness. And, perhaps in response to the move towards shiny and technologically advanced spaces, traditional and often old fashioned cleaning tools and appliances are becoming sought after, and pricey, home accessories. Where the interior design of the 1950s moved towards homes of convenience and leisure, hiding our work away, the shining archetypes of traditional domesticity are once again being celebrated. To revert back to the kitchen again, Crawford describes the profundity of tools and objects: "The most reassuring (kitchens) are those where all the utensils are on show, the beloved tools in a workshop with sturdy shelves laden with a mass of plates, bowls, pans, ready for action (...) These speak of a home that nurtures and sustains."

Many Stores, such as Labour and Wait in London, are responding to a market for simple objects, communicating simple domesticity. Their stock might truly be described as minimalist; it is simple, unadorned and purely focused on utility. Their shelves are lined with tool bags and buckets. Busy lives, technological overload and an un-satiated hunger for practical work have created a nostalgia for the 'traditional domestic' which is reflected in these objects with an atmosphere of longing for simpler times. We need these objects to provide an aesthetically pleasant and nostalgic means of carrying out our simple household tasks. These objects have acquired a sort of specialness, which elicits a sense of connection in the work of our household chores.

This research has revealed an importance in 'doing' within the home rather than just experiencing it simply as surroundings. This interactive engagement with the objects of the home connects us to them and in turn the space within which this occurs becomes itself into something we recognize as home. To summarise with Heidegger "Entities can genuinely show itself only in dealings cut to its own measure (hammering with a hammer, for example); but in such dealings an entity of this kind is not grasped thematically as an entity-Thing, (...) the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize upon it, use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more it is encountered as that which it is – as equipment." (1996, p98).



ATMOSPHERE

The practical aspects of emotional connection through work or 'action' in the home, have been discussed, but what about atmosphere? Atmosphere, as a concept, is much less tangible and more difficult to measure. It deals with the feelings and emotions aroused by the mood of the home. Our perception of it can be impacted by our sensory experience, but equally by memory, nostalgia and personal notions of taste and identity. It can also be influenced by factors such as materiality, form and colour. In his book, aptly titled *Atmospheres*, Peter Zumthor, touches on the numerous factors that can influence one's experience of an atmosphere, in his description of a village square. "So what moved me? Everything. The things themselves, the people, the air; noises, sound, colours, material presences, textures, forms too - forms I can appreciate. Forms I can try to decipher: Forms I find beautiful. What else moved me? My mood, my feelings, the sense of expectation that filled me while I was sitting there. Which brings that famous Platonic sentence to mind: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" (2005, p16).

Zumthor states influences such as his own mood and feelings in his perception of the atmosphere of the square, this gives some indication of the challenges of subjectivity that we face in trying to design atmosphere and atmospheric objects. That said there are some universally accepted rules for atmosphere, particularly in the home, which can be studied and applied. Ilse Crawford (2005) writes extensively about the creation of just such an atmosphere, one that evokes warmth, ease and intimacy, the central qualities of home. "Familiar forms bring comfort. Solid materials can give weight. Robust and heavy textiles can reassure. Delicate design just doesn't do it from this perspective. And of course, it is also about the things you can't see, such as privacy, warmth, clean air and light." (p43)

So, what is the object's role in this? How can it be used to control or affect the atmosphere of a space? Many of the same rules apply; familiar domestic forms, warm recognisable materials, inviting textures, tactility, and the use of lighting objects to shape the space. Though discussed in the context of architecture, Zumthor (2005) places great emphasis on materials. He talks about "An extraordinary sense of the presence and weight of materials," (p28) In his discussion of the work of the Arte Provera group, Zumthor lays down a benchmark for working with materials "What impresses me is the precise and sensuous way they use materials. It seems anchored in an ancient, elemental knowledge about man's use of materials, and at the same time to expose the very essence of these materials, which is beyond all culturally conveyed meaning." (p18) The end goal is that "materials, (...) can be made to shine and vibrate." (p10).

Light is another obvious instrument in the creation of atmosphere, perhaps the one that first springs to mind. We might think of the romance of a candle lit meal, the sterile cleanliness of a fluorescent supermarket aisle, or the comforting glow of a child's night-light. Light is a powerful regulator of ambiance. One of the most beautiful writers on the subject of light, or rather it's converse, is Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (1977). He manages to capture and highlight for us the subtleties of light and shadow, their potential to create mood and atmosphere.

"We perceive atmosphere through our emotional sensibility - a form of perception that works incredibly quickly, and which we humans evidently need to help us survive."

Peter Zumthor

"Whenever I see the alcove of a tastefully built Japanese room, I marvel at our comprehension of the secrets of shadows, our sensitive use of shadow and light. For the beauty of the alcove is not the work of some clever device. An empty space is marked off with plain wood and plain walls, so that the light drawn into it forms dim shadows within emptiness. There is nothing more. And yet, when we gaze into the darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam, around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, though we know perfectly well it is mere shadow, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquility holds sway." (p20)

Atmosphere in objects might also be thought of from the point of view of memory, and reminiscence. Jasper Morrison in particular speaks about this as part of his thinking around 'super-normal' objects.

"I think there's a sub-group of Super Normal objects, which is a very subjective one. They are Super Normal through familiarity and even nostalgic memories. I think everyone could point to at least one item in their home and describe it as an object they love to have around for the memory of past atmosphere that it evokes. Our appreciation of atmosphere is often linked of cross-referenced with the past and objects that played a part in some previous atmospheric memories have a powerful hold on us." (2007, p7)

This emotive, memory driven atmosphere is discussed in greater length in the section 'Emotive Objects' as well as the earlier section 'Home and Self' which dealt with the relevant thinkings about identity and objects.

Our most valuable tools, for atmosphere, as designers are; light, material, form and texture. These should all reference the human, the identifiable, reliable and strong. Their characteristics should be deeply familiar; our response to them should be almost primal. Again, Crawford (2005) is an expert source for thinking on the subject of atmosphere in a home context and provides many succinct and clear thoughts; on familiarity "Homely archetypes create a warm feeling around them. A turned-leg table, standard and table lamps can work together with the rest of your furniture for a sense of domesticity." (p43) On warmth "feeling cold is linked to fear and vulnerability" she quotes Roger Deakin as saying "a wood fire in the hearth is a little household sun". (p44) On colour "the colours we surround ourselves with affect us psychologically. Grey, black and brown feel earthy and resolute." (p44) And on light "We feel safer and more at home in pools of light. But we generally overlight our spaces. Think of the eternal appeal of candlelight." (p44) Some of this may appear as basic advice but what she correctly concentrates on here, is our human experience of spaces as an emotional and sensual one. Atmosphere engages all the senses. Not just the senses of the present, but also our sensory memories of the past. Evocative smells, sounds and feelings can transport us and connect our history and memory with our home.

When we design for atmosphere we must pull from many wells of knowledge and experience. The atmosphere created by the final objects should be gentle but immersive. It should facilitate the strong reaction to home of relaxation and rest. What appears to be instrumental is the concentration on the primal human associations with safety

and warmth. Soft but deep earthy colours found in nature, heavy but supple tactile experiences, low and natural light, and forms shaped by memory, familiarity and archetypal domesticity. These will serve as important guidelines in the creation of the final articles. There is a relative intangibility to designing for atmosphere, that is more about heart than head. Zumthor (2006) describes a similar approach.

"When I design a building, I frequently find myself sinking into old, half-forgotten memories, and then I try to recollect what the remembered architectural situation was really like, what it had meant to me at the time, and I try to think how it could help me now to revive that vibrant atmosphere pervaded by the simple presence of things, in which everything had its own specific place and form. And although I cannot trace any special forms, there is a hint of fullness and of richness that makes me think: this I have seen before. Yet, at the same time, I know that it is all new and different, and that there is no direct reference to a former work of architecture which might divulge the secret of the memory-laden mood." (p10)



THINKING ABOUT OBJECTS

The previous chapters and sections of this thesis touch upon the thoughts and principles, which I believe, support the central thinking of this thesis. These chapters formed a backdrop of ideas through theoretical research. This has allowed me to form a workable framework within which to design appropriate products and objects. This section demonstrates the translation of the previous theory into a set of guidelines, which I created for myself, as a sort of rulebook for designing for the movable home. My initial task was to identify and summarise the fundamental concepts.

Emotive Objects, Memories & Keepsakes

In chapter three we discussed 'Emotive Objects'. Emotive Objects are those to which we attach meaning. This is often through association with a particular event, or person, or simply as companions in our day-to-day lives. Memory is important. It allows us to reflect on our past, our aspirations and ourselves. A designer cannot dictate what is emotionally valuable and nostalgic for a person. But they can, perhaps, provide a context which demonstrates that value and meaning.

Connection

The vital characteristic of a home, as distinct from a dwelling, is that its occupant feels a real and emotional connection with it. The implications of this and how it might be achieved were discussed in the section 'Objects as Space'. As the thesis of this work is concerned with how connection with space might be created through objects, we are concerned with creating objects which amplify connection, both between the object and its owner but also through the object to the space.

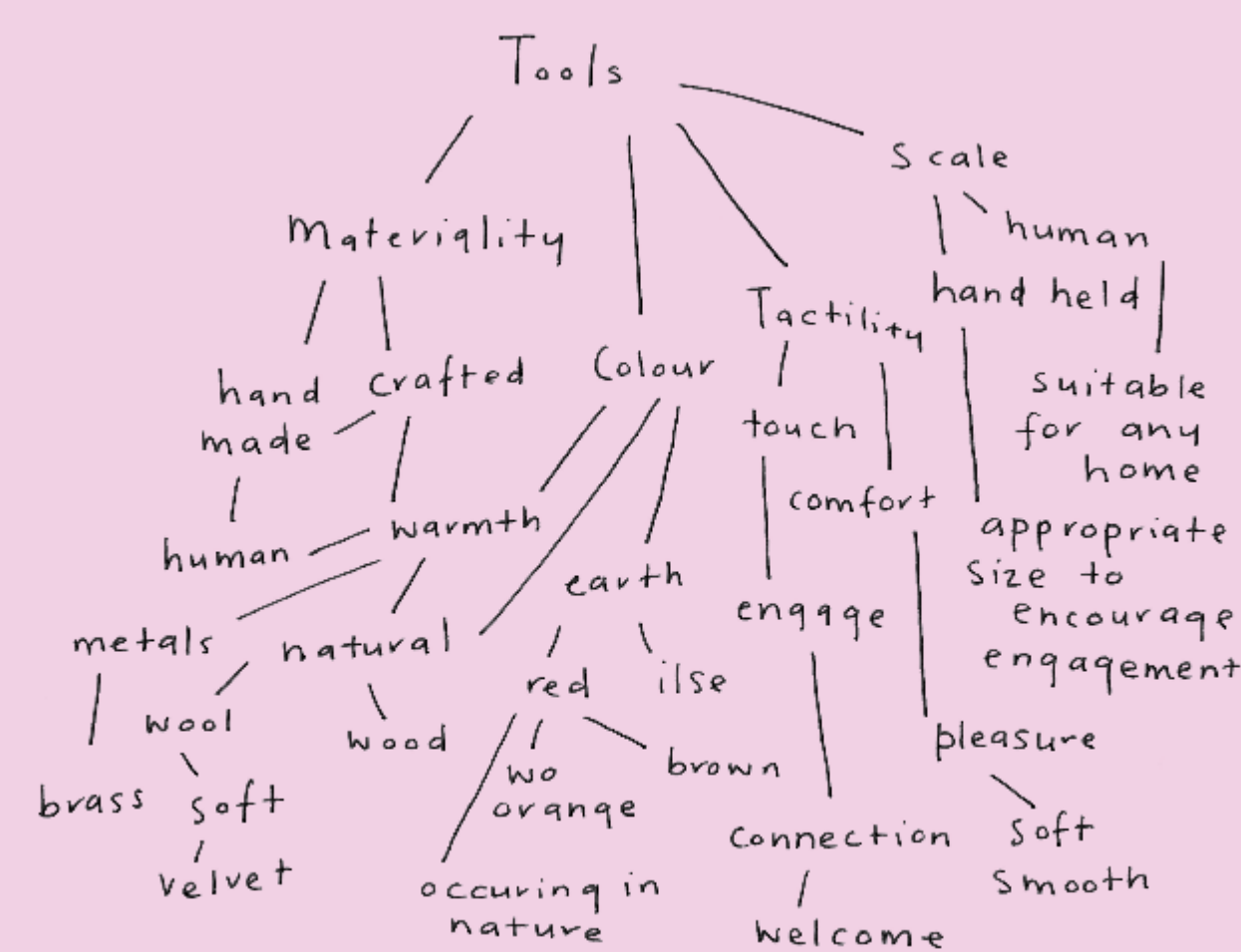
Identity

As with every object with which we connect ourselves, there is an implication that our things represent something of us. This is most discussed in fashion as a form of self-expression but it is also evident in our homes. This is discussed in the section 'Home and Self', but there are also overlaps with the thinking around emotive objects. We attach particular meaning to the objects that we choose to surround ourselves with; our objects are memories and reminders about who we are and who we wish to be. Our idea of ourselves should be reflected in our homes and our home objects.

Atmosphere

Home is both an emotional and physical place. It is primarily a shelter. The feeling of safety indoors and away from the elements, even metaphorical ones are integral to the appeal of home. The feeling of safety and inside-ness is heightened as an otherness of exposure and being outside. It is important to make this contrast tangible and emotionally moving.

So these are 'the ideal', the guidelines which these home objects should adhere to. These are the needs that we should attempt to satisfy. Next, I assessed the tools at my disposal. What were the means with which I could work towards these goals? The following are those, which I felt most useful and effective in achieving this task.



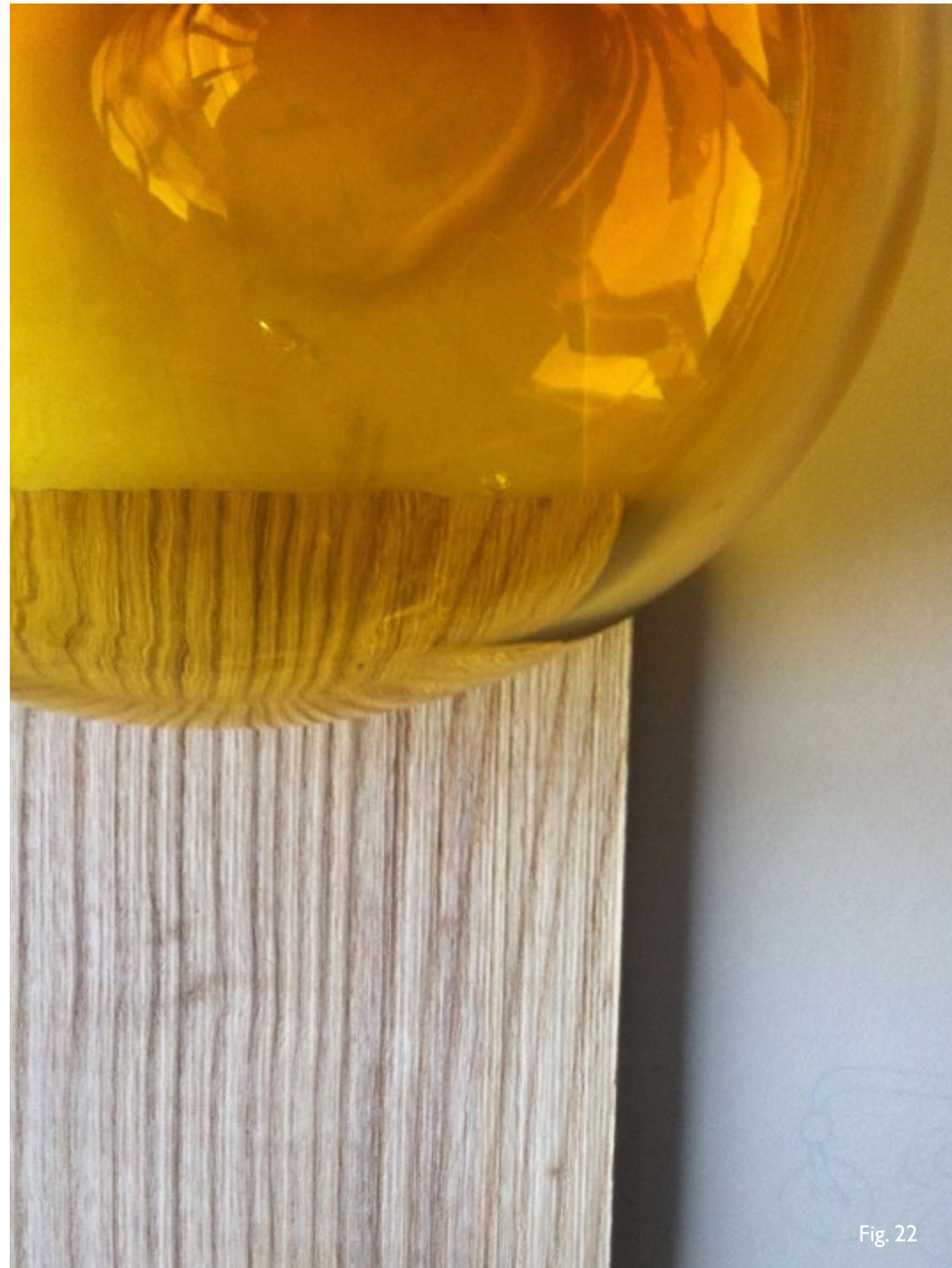


Fig. 22

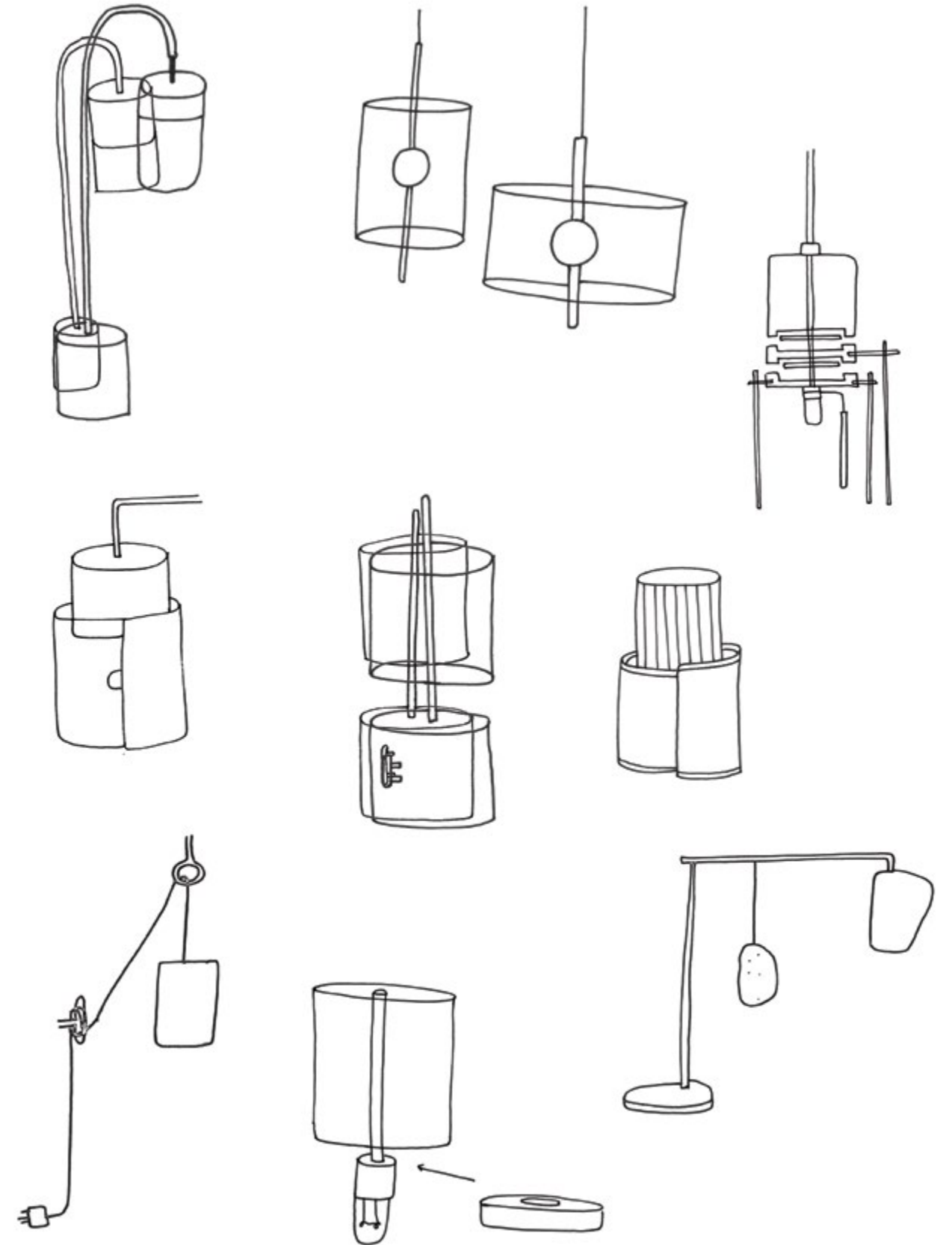
PROCESS

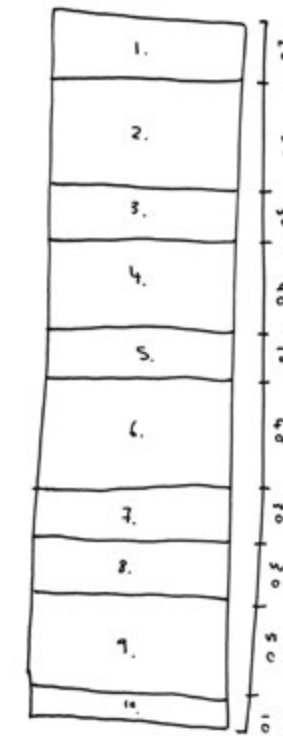
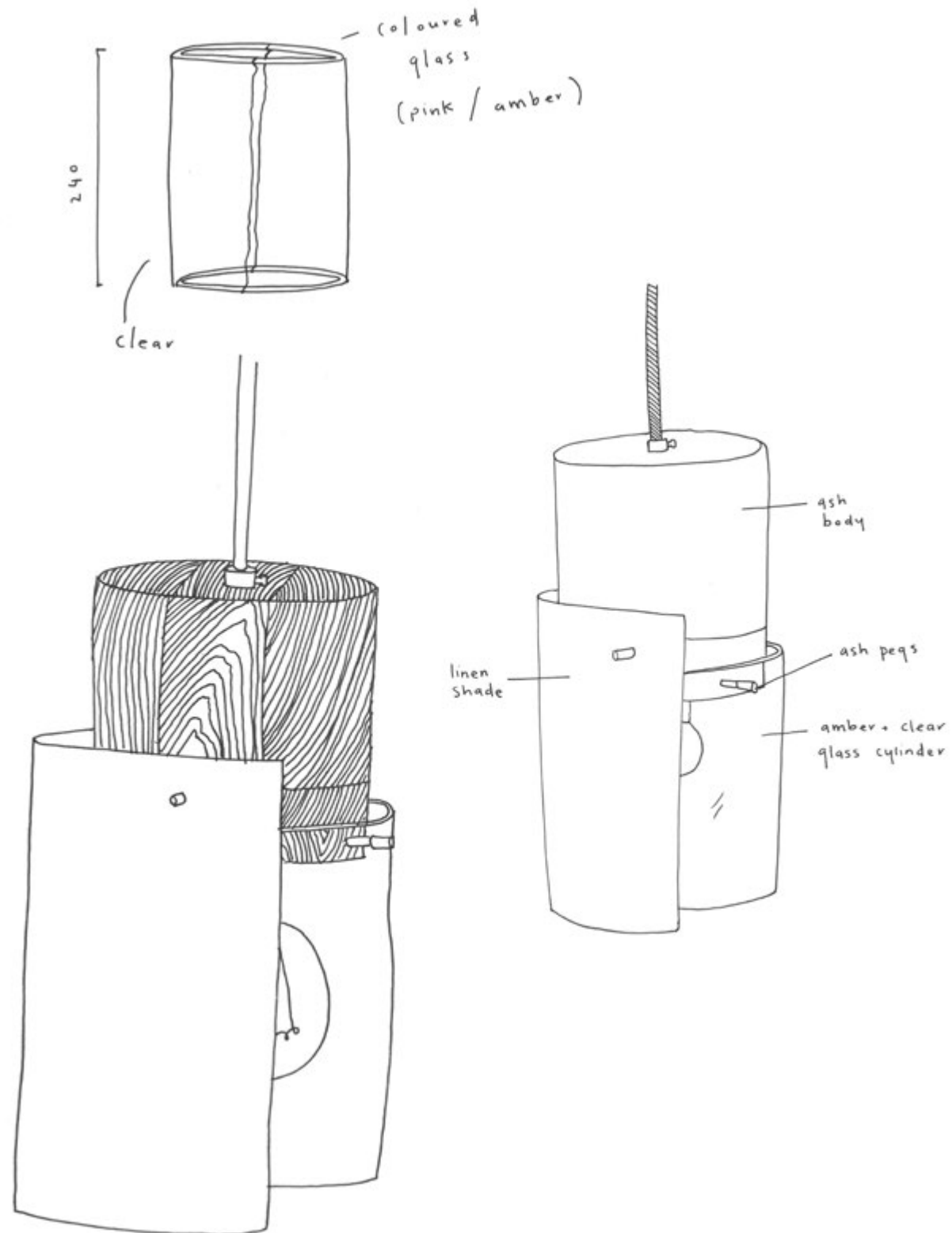
Now I had identified the needs to be met and the means with which I hoped to satisfy those needs. Next I began to think about objects. Things which could marry the idea with the tools in creating a physical iteration of the idea. In my earlier section on 'the role of objects' I had identified a number of domestic objects which I felt could be imbued with further meaning, or become heightened versions of themselves in a quest to supply a deeper connection to the space as home.

This is a short, visual, documentation of some of my process. It is comprised a selection of sketches from my journals. It concentrates on the idea generation period of the project; bridging the gap between the creation of design parameters, as informed by the theoretical research in the previous section, and the beginning stages of sketching and object design. During the transition between theory and practice, I crystalised my thinking, as outlined in the previous section, in order to provide myself with tools for designing the resulting home objects. Throughout my earlier research, ideas for objects emerged in my mind. The following process documents a free thinking period when these ideas were explored and tested on paper. Throughout this exercise I continually brought myself back to the theory in order to ensure that a clear concept was communicated.

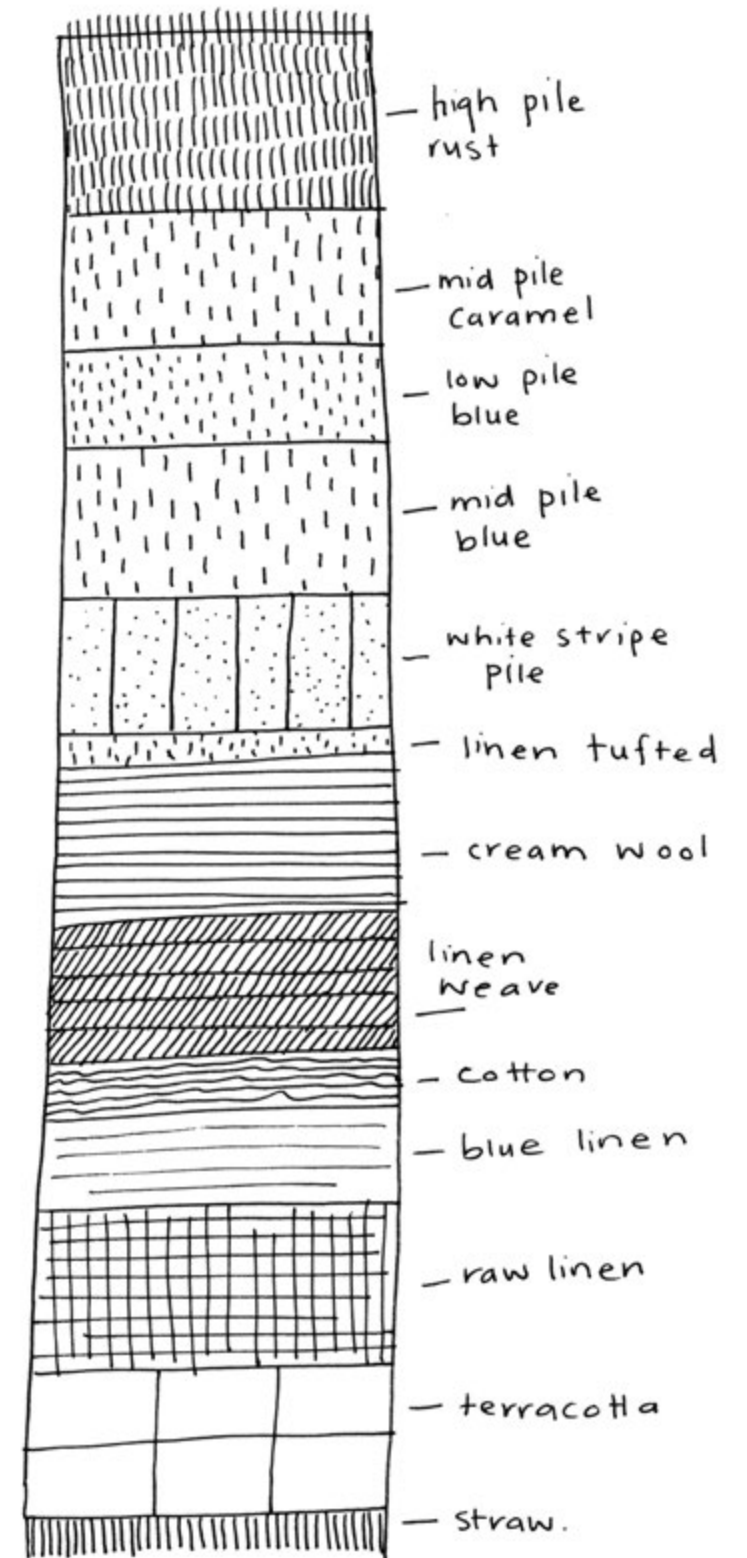
“The materials around us will speak to us of the highest hopes we have for ourselves. We can feel liberated. We can, in a profound sense, return home.”

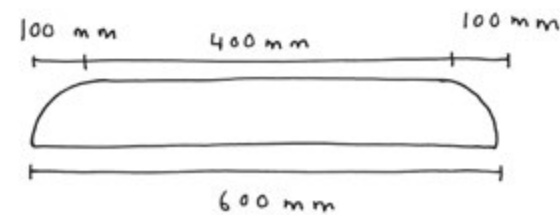
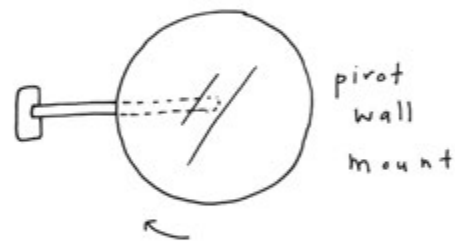
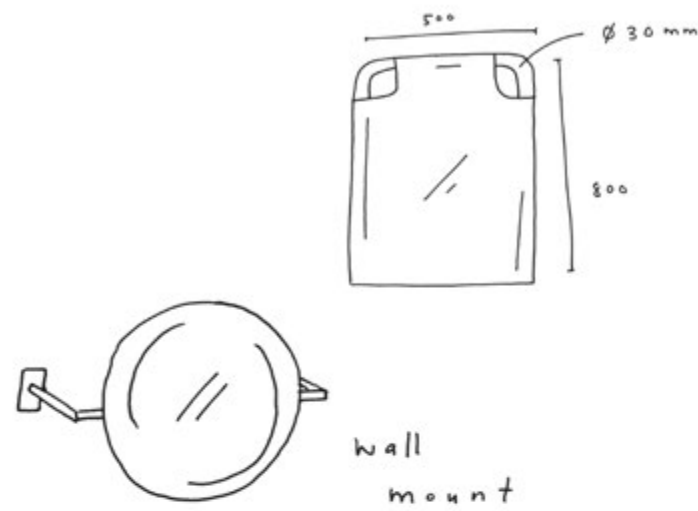
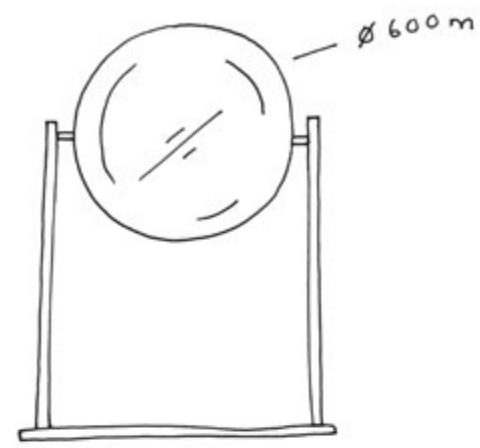
Alain De Botton





1. Clay
2. rope
3. straw
4. raw linen
5. rough wool
6. raw wool
7. low pile tuft
8. mid pile tuft
9. high pile tuft
10. long sheepskin

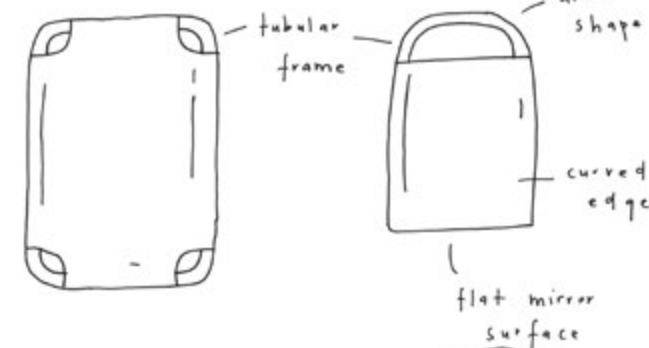
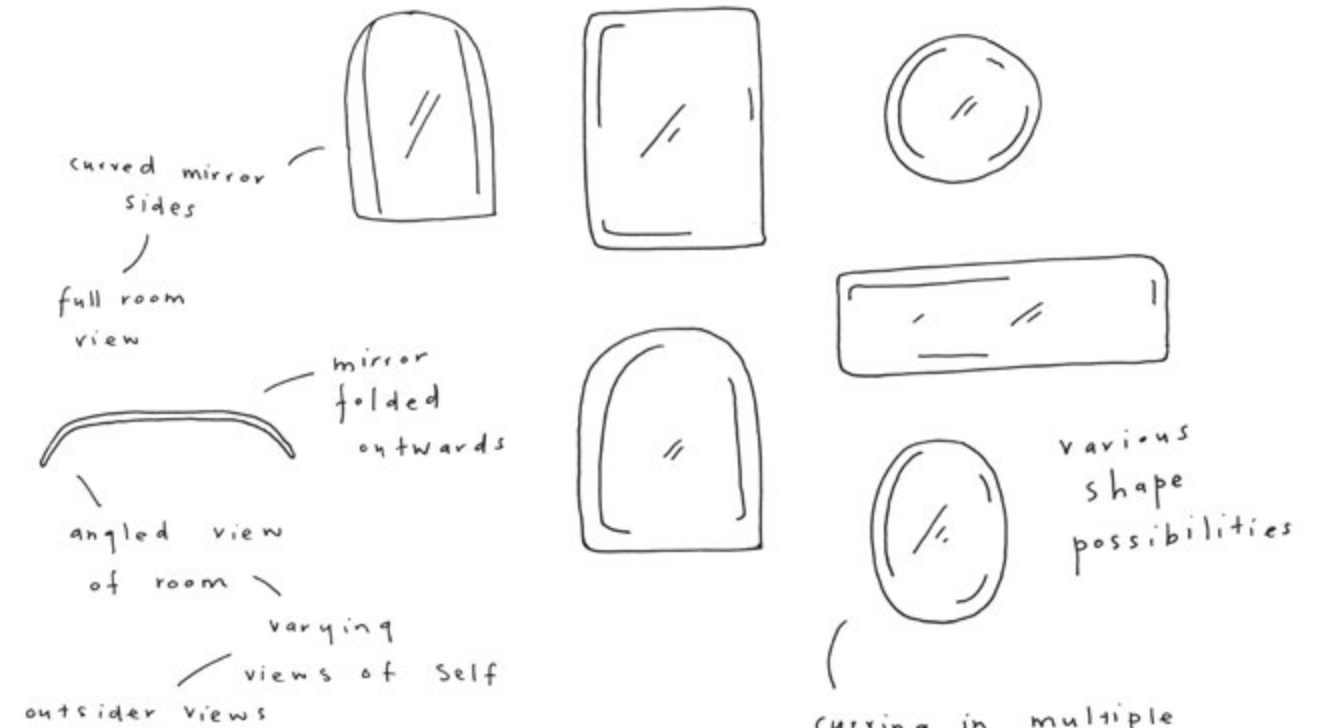




- Places a person both physically & psychologically in a space.

- Deep psychological reaction to reflection of ourselves. Allows us to relate to ourselves.

- Connects you to your 'home' when you see yourself within it.

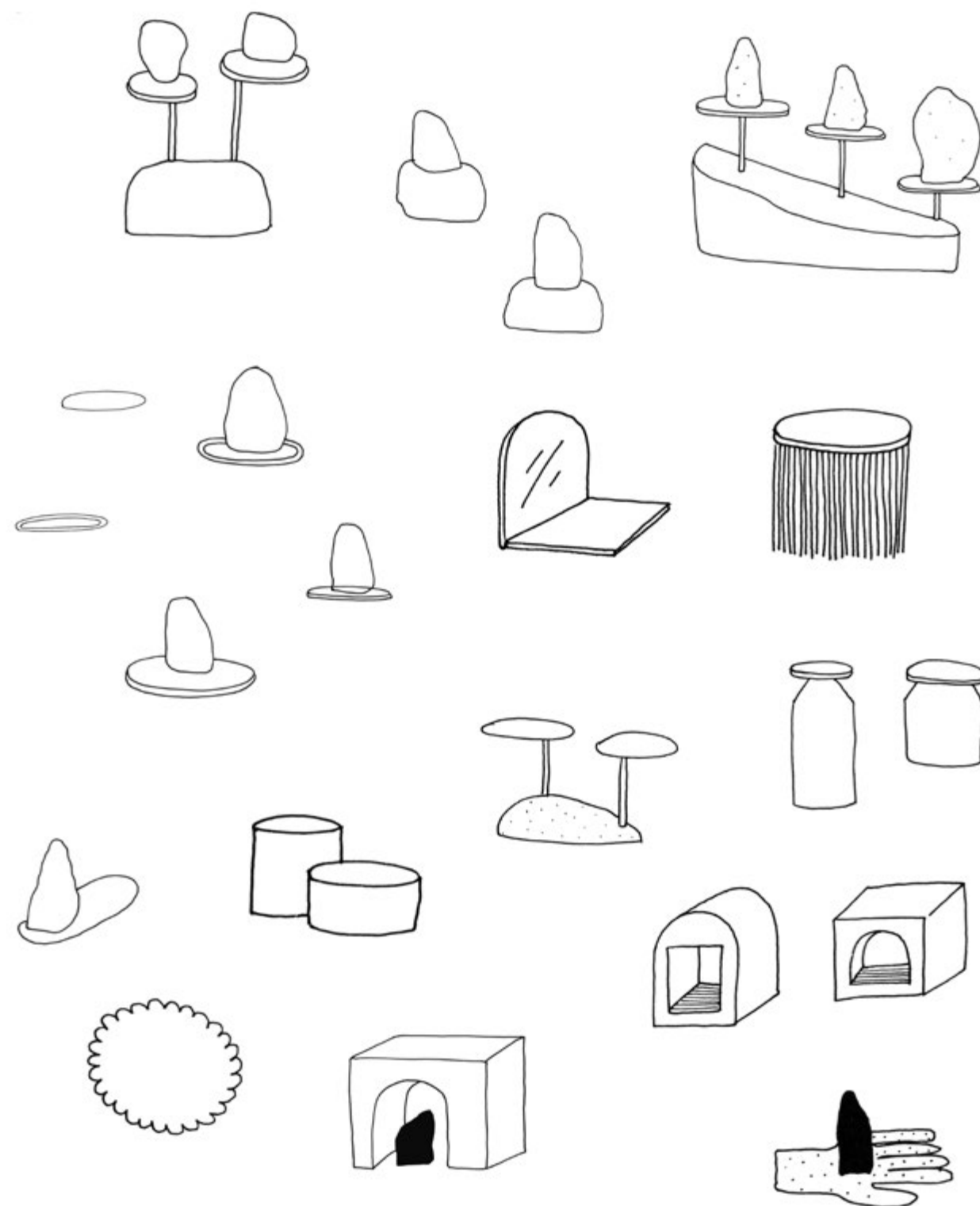
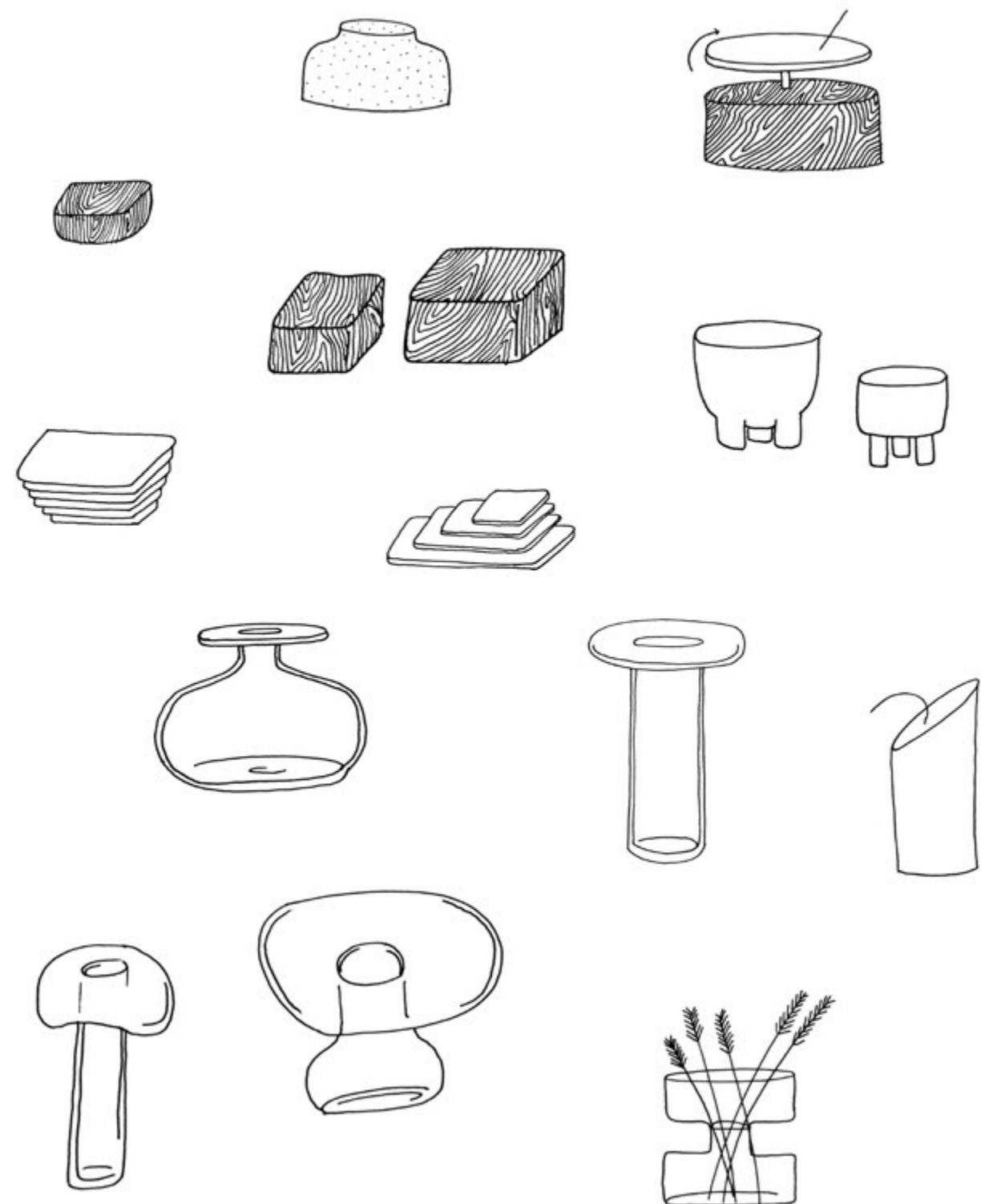


shows yourself within the space

wall mount
flat centre
surface reflects
true image

curved edges
reflect rest
of the room

curving in multiple
directions (molded)
adds great
complexity to the
production process



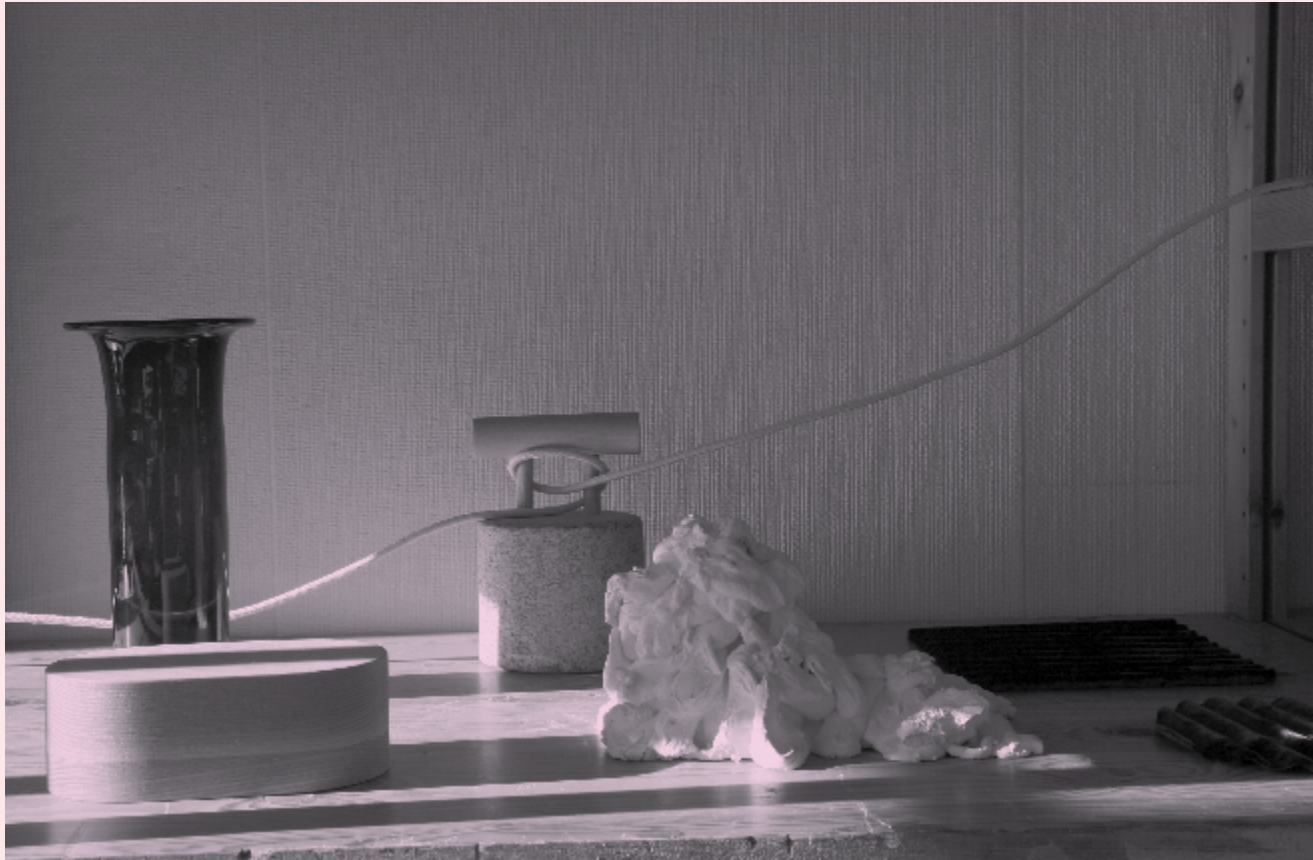
FIVE

Tether Light

Placement Mirrors

Threshold Rug

Valuables



This chapter will describe and display the final objects. It will trace the original through to the final concept of the object. It will hopefully describe for the reader the object's intention and how this reflects the thinking of the thesis.

TETHER LIGHT

Light is a powerful tool in making a room feel habitable and homely. Throughout this project I spoke to several people about their experiences in making a home in a temporary space. One person I talked with described the feeling of grounding when she arrived in a new 'home' and plugged in her favorite lamp. This began my thoughts about the psychological impact of plugging in a light, illuminating the corners of a new space and literally tethering yourself to a place.

'Tether' light is intended as both a tool of active engagement and a source of atmosphere. A light source was an obvious object to include in the final collection; lighting is a fundamental method of making a space hospitable. "Lighting is one of the key elements in determining whether we feel contained and comforted in a space." (Crawford, 2005, p44) The interplay between light and shadow highlights the limits of a space; it determines the extents of a room as it illuminates them. A soft low light also suggests to us warmth and safety.

'Tether' light attempts to connect us to our space in a number of ways. First as its name suggests, it provides a tether to the space, a physical attachment. As with any electric lamp, the act of plugging the light into the socket and illuminating the room offers a literal connection between you and the space. Hanging and hoisting the light aloft affords the user an act of declaration of ownership as they make the space their own. The height at which the bulb is hung also determines the atmosphere created by the light emitted. The bulb is illuminated and as the space is filled with light the boundaries are defined. The interaction between the partially tinted

glass and the linen shade as they rotate around one another, provides a control over the atmosphere and mood of the space.

The important elements of the lamp are the weight and the quality of light. The light is attached to the ceiling by a metal tube through which the cable can be fed and adjusted. The shade is double layered and gently rotates using 'Lazy Susan' bearings to alter the atmosphere created by the light. The movement of the shade gently reveals and disappears the bulb. The outer linen shade diffuses the light while the inner glass cylinder is partly amber glass bringing variable warmth. The light is counterbalanced with a grey granite weight on the ground. It psychologically weighs down both the light and the space. A wooden cleat connects the cable to this weight, bringing to mind the action of tying down, familiar from grounding a tent with pegs or tying a boat up at a dock. The cleat is a notable point of contact between us and the object. 'Tether' light is intended as an object of use, solid and heavy with ash and granite, but also a delicate spinning 'thing', which changes the room when the natural light is low.







PLACEMENT MIRROR

Far from the negative connotations of vanity and narcissism, the 'Placement' wall and table mirrors celebrate the importance of the mirror as a centre of ritual and as an instrument that allows us to commune with ourselves. As Seneque said "Mirrors were invented for better knowledge and understanding of self." Mirrors provide a sort of special way to engage with our selves. They are a powerful tool of self-awareness and have been called a psychological door to the otherness of self. This otherness of self allows us to observe and reflect upon an objective view of our selves. They also allow us to place our image in a particular context, to truly witness ourselves in a space. This is the intention with the placement mirror. We are psychologically somehow more 'there' if we can see ourselves there.

The curved edges of the 'Placement' mirrors allow for a fuller view and awareness of the space, placing the viewer firmly within it. Inspired by a walk through the back streets of Milan. I came across many convex mirrors carefully placed to allow drivers to navigate the narrow streets safely. I was struck with the interesting view that they provided of the street as I passed by.

The 'Placement' mirrors are intended to deepen our connection with the place in which we dwell, by using our own reflection as a means of grounding us in the space. The curved sides and bent edges give us a more complete view of the space which reflects back our own image in context. The mirrors not only engage through reflection, they also engage through the act of maintenance. Brass, as a metal that requires upkeep, was deliberately used. The reflection will fade if the mirror is not cared for. A patina will build and note the time passed and must be polished back to its full glory in order to be used.

"I tell you, my dear, Narcissus was no egoist...he was merely another of us who, in our unshatterable isolation, recognized, on seeing his reflection, the one beautiful comrade, the only inseparable love... poor Narcissus, possibly the only human who was ever honest on this point."

Truman Capote









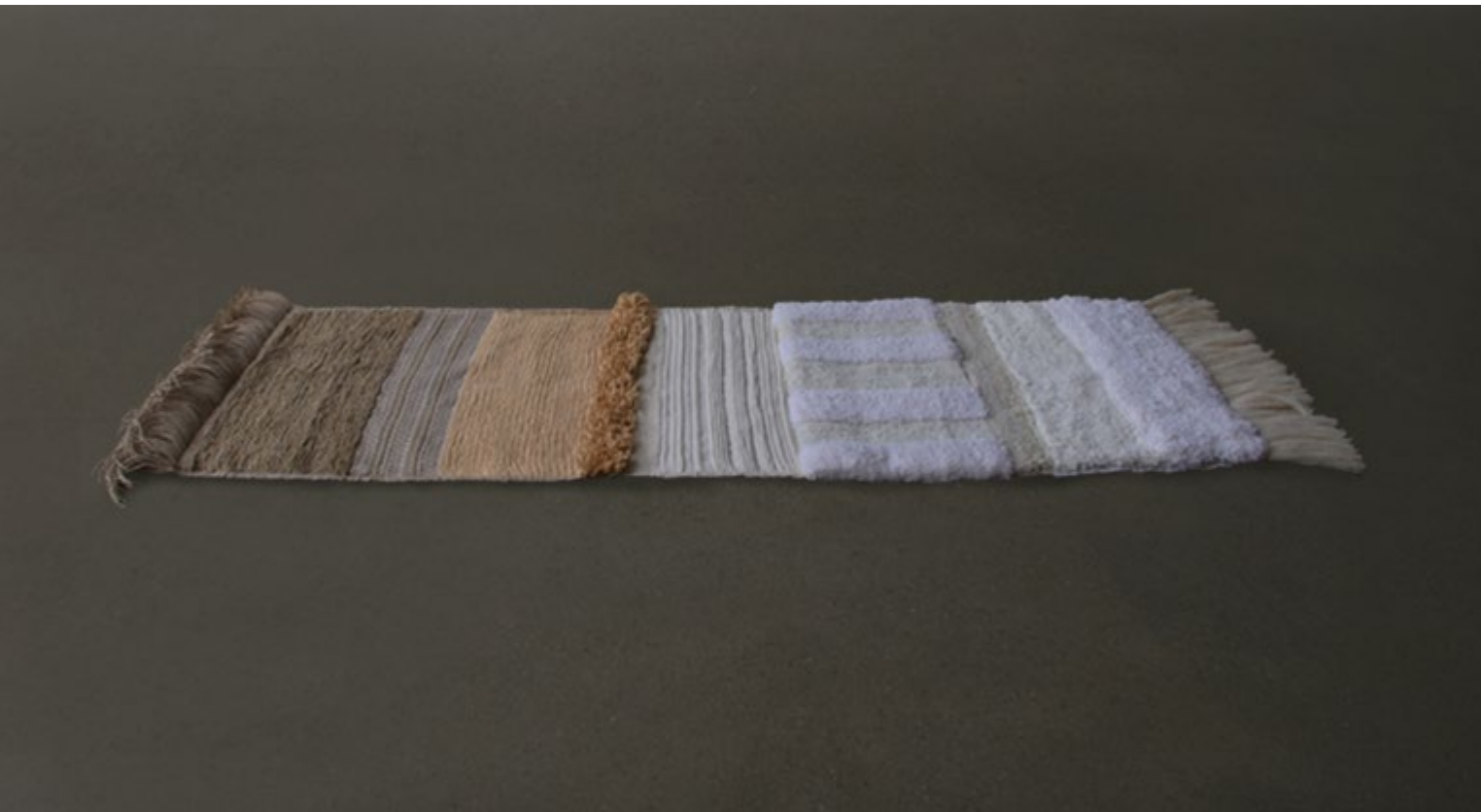
THRESHOLD RUG

This piece is about homecoming, the sense of release when crossing the threshold of your home. It signifies the psychological shedding of the public self and the relaxation into that sense of home that brings comfort. The rug attempts this through tactile contact with the feet. It grounds us and provides a palpable journey from rough woven raw linen to dense and lush alpaca wool.

The threshold is an intensely symbolic place, and was historically the focus of much superstition. Edwin Heathcote (2012) describes the traditions and customs around the doorway "We may still hold a housewarming or put a wreath on our doors at Christmas but, in earlier times, living sacrifices were made to appease evil spirits. Once mummified cats might be buried beneath the floor or chickens slaughtered so that their blood spilled onto the threshold. Those animal sacrifices transmuted over time to a coin buried under the building; you can still find old pennies beneath Victorian doorways, which is a good luck sacrifice." (p14)

The power ascribed to the threshold might seem exaggerated, but, recent research by the University of Notre Dame, Indiana has proven that the threshold, or doorframe, still serves as a strong psychological trigger. The research suggests that the common problem of entering a room and forgetting why you went in there, may be less to do with poor memory and more to do with act of crossing its threshold. The threshold "it appears, triggers a change. What has become known as the 'doorway effect'" (Heathcote, 2012, p19) It has been explained as a way for the brain to compartmentalise information by rearranging it in reference to a new location. "It is the only way it can cope with the vast amount of data fed into it." (Heathcote, 2012, p19) The 'Threshold' rug heightens the transition, benefitting from this psychological trigger to assist with homecoming.

'Threshold' begins with a coarse and bristly fringe of paper string. The feeling under bare feet of the changing textures from rough hackles to the safety and comfort of soft fluffy wool indicates a move from public to private, from 'on' to 'off', from work to relaxation. The initial section is woven using a range of materials from raw linen to untreated cotton, to rough wool and paper yarn. The weave and yarn becomes progressively finer and more inviting as we reach the tufted sections. The tufting uses various yarn heights and wool qualities to provide a soft and enveloping landing into the bosom of your home. In place of the traditional doormat, the rug offers a sharp physical contrast and provides a psychological catalyst for relaxation, through our feet, to our brain. We are home, we are safe, we are contented. It presents a point of contact for a brief meditation in mindful homecoming.







VALUABLES

The 'Valuables' collection is designed to display the objects often touched upon in the preceeding text. That is, those things, which hold special meaning for their owner. I refer to objects thick with memory and sentimentality, objects rich in nostalgia and atmosphere. Throughout the research, the notion of a home as being a place filled with collected personal possessions arose over and over, and with that the challenge (or impossibility) of designing such items. Our connection to home is really a connection to a place that retells to us our own story, and it is these very items that I have described, which have the facilities to do this.

Emotion attached to objects is often the result of association. This association can be with the person who gifted it to us, or with a specific place or time. It can simply be as witnesses to the day-to-day happenings within our home, absorbed by these objects as spectators to our lives. It can also be an entrusted heirloom or the former possession of a loved one no longer with us. These things are impossible to design, and so the 'Valuables' collection designs for them instead.

The collection concentrates on how these objects are highlighted, valued and displayed. The work is based on traditional ideas of display. I have studied and was inspired by museum exhibitions, ceremonial presentations and domestic ritual of display. Familiar archetypes such as glass boxes, dressers, elevated plinths, precious materials and luxurious fabric became the visual language of this collection. The collection includes the 'Stalk' vase, 'Raised' Pedestals, Object frame 'Halos' and Corrugated Velvet 'Cushions'. These are all ultra simplified and literal translations of prototypical modes of display.

The 'Stalk' vase is a quiet elevation of nature. It is designed to highlight but not overpower nature in the home. The name 'Stalk' refers to a desire on the part of the vase to camouflage itself as one with the flowers being displayed. Flowers, though temporary visitors in our homes, are often highly charged with emotion. They can say many things; I'm sorry, Congratulations! Or I love you. 'Stalk' provides a silent vessel from which the bouquet can sing its message. 'Raised' uses the long established practice of displaying precious items on elevated surfaces. We are all familiar with the museum practice of displaying objet d'arte, statues and treasures on prominent pedestals. 'Raised' mirrors this practice by providing small scale, solid ash plinths for the home. They can be used to highlight and bestow value upon our dearest keepsakes and personal items. 'Cushion' draws inspiration from the display of precious jewellery on velvet cushions. This is a mode of display that triggers connotations of value and preciousness. 'Cushion' again provides a mode of exhibiting smaller scale objects in the home. Corrugated steel upholstered in velvet provides a sense of movement and floating on which we can display our most personally cherished objects. 'Halo' uses thick rings of polished brass in various sizes to draw a circle around our prized ornaments. It draws attention with a golden mirror shine glowing around the object and by reproducing fragments of its reflection. The brass requires maintenance, as with the 'Placement' mirrors, invites the owner to tend to the objects and deepen the existing connection.



“It happens again and again when I enter a building and the rooms where people live - friends, acquaintances, people I don’t know at all: I’m impressed by the things that people keep around them, in their flats or where they work. And sometimes, I don’t know if you’ve noticed that too, you find things come together in a very caring, loving way, and that there’s this deep relationship.”

Peter Zumthor

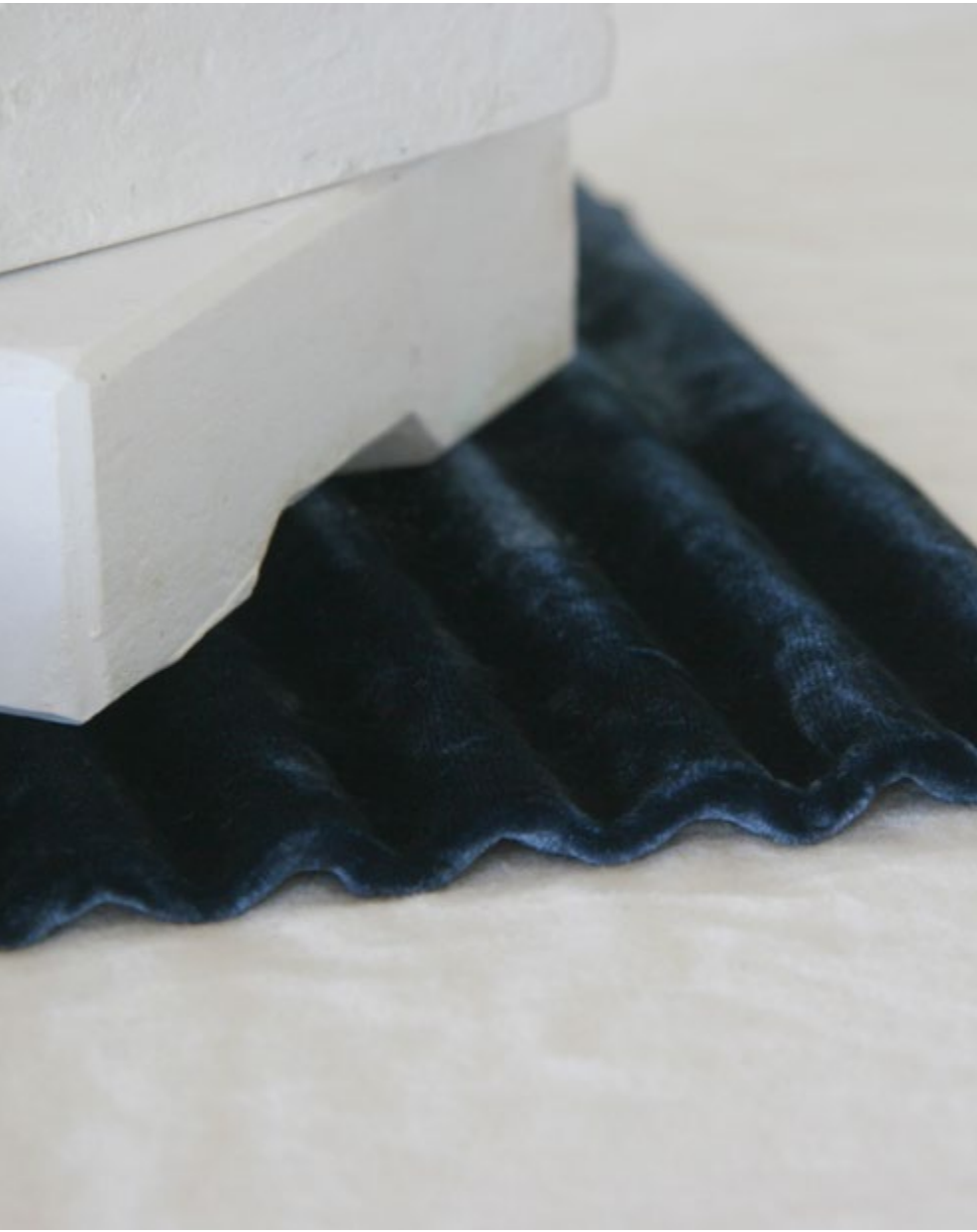
















SIX



Production

Work Diary

Conclusion



PRODUCTION

This section tracks the development from original design to final prototype and recognises the very real role that the production process has in shaping an object. It will describe the process of making each individual piece and acknowledge the issues, which arose during the making process. The prototype production was limited by a number of factors. The first was cost, as the project was self-funded. The second was my own ability as a maker as I made each component and assembled the pieces, with the exception of the glass blowing and stonework. The third factor was the facilities available at Aalto University. The facilities of the school, although quite exceptional in terms of both scope and access, still have limits, which affected some of my final output. This section will answer why the final objects look as they do, and in some cases why they have changed from their original design. Throughout the project I have endeavored to remain true to the original concepts, hopefully this constant referencing is communicated through the work.

Tether Light

The 'Tether' Light required the most varied range of processes for its production. It involved glass blowing, woodturning, precision woodwork, electrics, stonework and metalwork. The final design remained almost completely intact through the production. The most complex element of the piece was the main 'trunk' of the lamp, which was designed as one cylindrical block consisting of 3 sections. The sections were connected using 3-inch 'Lazy Susan' plate bearings which would allow them to rotate independent of one another. This process required a high level of accuracy and careful planning to avoid errors. I prepared the ash for turning by planing and gluing a block comprised of 3 sections. Another student at the school, Collin Velkoff, kindly carried out the woodturning, as I was not confident that I could achieve the level of precision required. The bearings were screwed in place on each side through a hole drilled through each of the pieces. This required a puzzling order of movements and reference to a YouTube video. To this body were attached 2 shades using small dowels turned in the workshop and using the mechanical turning machine. The outer shade was a traditional cotton diffuser, halved, and attached by a wooden frame, the second was a cylindrical glass shade.

Due to restrictions with the CNC machine and timing, I opted to make the glass molds from plaster. The glass shade was mainly transparent with an amber glass stroke of colour, which was to provide a variable warm light. A glass bubble was first formed, to which the colour bar was applied. The glass was then blown into the plaster mold. After annealing, the glass, which at this stage was a wide bottle shape, was cut at either end to create a cylinder. Three holes were (carefully) drilled in the cylinder and attached to the main body of the lamp using dowels. The piece was wired quite simply, using a regular bulb holder, and textile covered cable. I used a slightly cylindrical bulb to support the form of the other components. The stone weight was made using granite and was sourced externally. It was produced by Ville Mälikoskela. Then in the wood workshop the ash cleat was glued in place. The light is connected to the ceiling by a bent metal tube. This was simply cut to length and bent at a right angle each end in the bending machine.



Fig. 59; The Glass 'bottles' before they are cut to create the internal cylinders of the 'Tether' Light.

Threshold Rug

The 'Threshold' rug required weaving, tufting and textile assembly. The weaving was perhaps the most challenging as I have limited experience with the craft, though I received welcome help from the studio masters. Another factor, which could have improved the final rug, was the available weft/warp yarns as those available were perhaps too soft and unstructured to provide sufficient rigidity for the rug. Instead I achieved rigidity by reinforcing with a backing material. The tufting was more straightforward and simply required trial and error. Much of the initial tufting time was spent testing yarns and tuft lengths. The most time consuming element of this piece was the duplication of the process as it was often difficult to judge if a particular color or texture would work until it was complete and assembled alongside the other components. This meant that a number of the sections were repeated several times in order to satisfy my image of the final piece. The final assembly of the rug was quite simple if a little time consuming. I am particularly satisfied with how the fringe turned out. After many fringe trials I am happy that I chose the full, oversized tassels, which add a sense of scale that engages and amplifies the effect of the rug. Many of the challenges I faced throughout this process were resolved simply through trial, error and prototyping and would not be an issue with production in general.

Placement Mirrors

The original 'Placement' Mirror was to be constructed in a dome shape, curving on all sides, with a flat surface. This could only be achieved through a mold spinning process, which could not have been carried out inside the school. I was forced to alter the original design of the mirror, as the cost of this method of production was unfeasible. Perhaps it is synthetic happiness on my part, but I believe that this hitch, forcing me to re-think the design, has resulted in a more interesting product than it might have been originally. The new design keeps the curve that is at the core of the concept. The idea behind this was to allow the user a more complete view of the space and themselves within it.

The facilities within the school allowed for curving or bending of the brass in one direction only. This forced me to return to the sketching and prototyping stage and after a number of tests, the resulting designs were a table mirror and a wall mirror. The table mirror uses an arched silhouette, which curves at the sides. The top curve was cut using a radius-cutting machine and following this, the sides were curved using the roller-bending machine. The radius cutter creates an indent in the centre of the circle that it is cutting, which would have ruined the face of the mirror. I used a metal plate to cover the spot. This made the cutting slightly more difficult but it solved the indentation problem so it was a small price to pay. The wall mirror is curved in the opposite direction, towards the viewer and not only increases their view of the room but also their view of themselves. This was produced in much the same way as the table mirror. The top and bottom curves were cut using the radius cutter; with the sides curved in the roller-bending machine. Both mirrors had to have their edges filed and were polished, by hand, to a mirror shine.



Fig. 60; A detail of the loom used to weave the beginning section of the 'Threshold' Rug.



Fig. 61; A play of sunlight through the deep green glass of the 'Stalk' vase.

Cushions

The 'Cushions' are folded steel sheets 'upholstered' with velvet to create a stiff yet dynamic velvet cushion. The folding effect was measured in order to cut the appropriate outlines for the shapes pre-folding; as the folding would shorten the original dimensions in one direction. The velvet was then edged and glued in place on each side. The final glue used was epoxy as many of the other glues soaked through the velvet. The velvet was originally intended to be mohair velvet but was changed to high quality polyester velvet due to the cost and scarcity of the mohair. The only deviation from the original design here was the scale and dimensions. The original design proved too big in reality and appeared out of proportion with the curve of the metal folds and strangely large for a home settling.

Raised Pedestals

The 'Rasised' ash pedestals are simple in their appearance and construction. Though simplicity often requires care, as errors cannot hide behind detail. Blocks were prepared from the ash planks by planing, sanding and gluing to the correct height. The pieces were cut, from blocks of appropriate height, using the band saw and a template. The curved ends were formed using the belt sander and then sanded by hand to a silky smooth finish. They were treated with linseed oil.

Halos

The production of 'Halos' was relatively uneventful. This is mainly as the concept grew from a previous process trial, in this case, the object almost came before the concept, or one simultaneously answered the other. As with the 'Placement' Mirrors the machinery dictated the thickness of the brass used to make the pieces. Halos used the same radius-cutting machine as the mirrors to create perfectly controlled circles. Unlike the

mirrors, the centre would be cut out of the circles so the indent in the brass was not an issue. This made cutting much easier, as the brass was simply trimmed so that the largest of the circles could be cut from it and then the machine was adjusted to cut concentric circles, moving in 15mm each time to create 6 rings. The edges then had to be filed and the rings polished on a buffing machine. This was the only hiccup in the making as the rings had the tendency to get 'sucked in' to the rotation of the buffing pad. This was a little unsettling at speed, was potentially dangerous and resulted in the accidental bending of a number of the prototypes.

Stalk Vase

For a simple shape, this vase proved quite complex to produce. As with the 'Tether' Light, the mold for the glass blowing was made using plaster. This proved to be quite tricky as the inner form consists of a tall, thin cylinder, a relatively difficult shape to produce on the plaster wheel. After a number of failed attempts, I opted to make the form in sections, this finally worked. The mold was made initially with a mix of plaster and paper fibre. Unfortunately this mix was not successful as the glass could not turn inside the mold. I re-made it with a plaster/toilet paper mix which worked well. Another adjustment had to be made in the glass blowing process. Originally the flat lip was to be fully mold blown. Kazushi, the glass studio master, after a number of failed attempts, opted instead to work the glass lip manually. This resulted in a less perfect softer finish, which in retrospect lends a touch of human imperfection, a personality, which, following from my previous research, cannot be, a bad thing in engaging with human emotions.



THE MOVEMENTS OF MAKING

A photographic documentation of some of the production process involved in the prototyping of the final objects and their predecessors. It includes the process and the many movements, experiments, slip ups and solutions that happened over the past number of months.



Fig. 62; A view of the glass studio before work commences.
 Fig 63; Kazushi Nakada carefully forming the lip of the 'Stalk' vase
 Fig. 64; Kazushi again forming a bubble before blowing it into the plaster mold seen in the foreground.

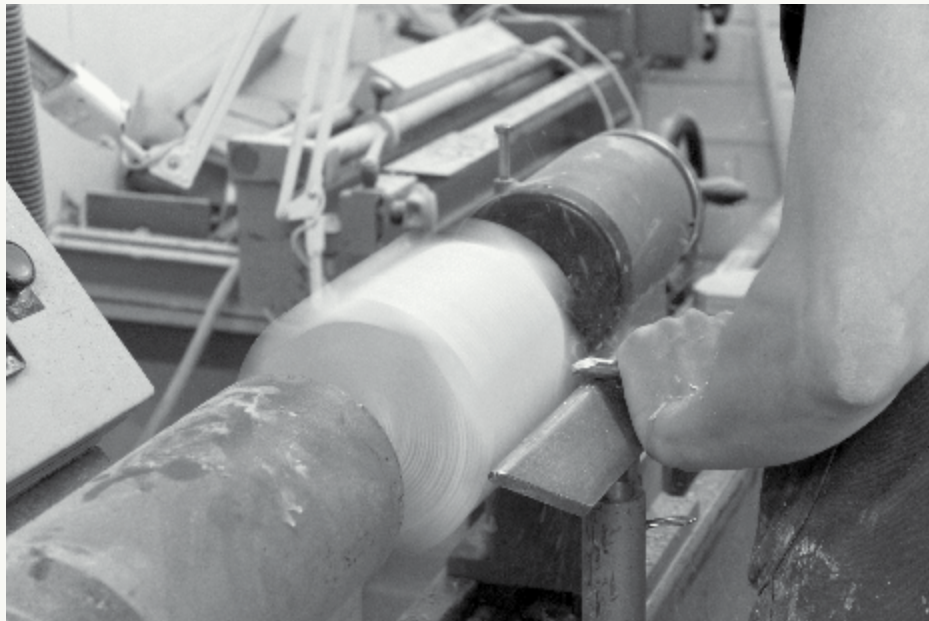
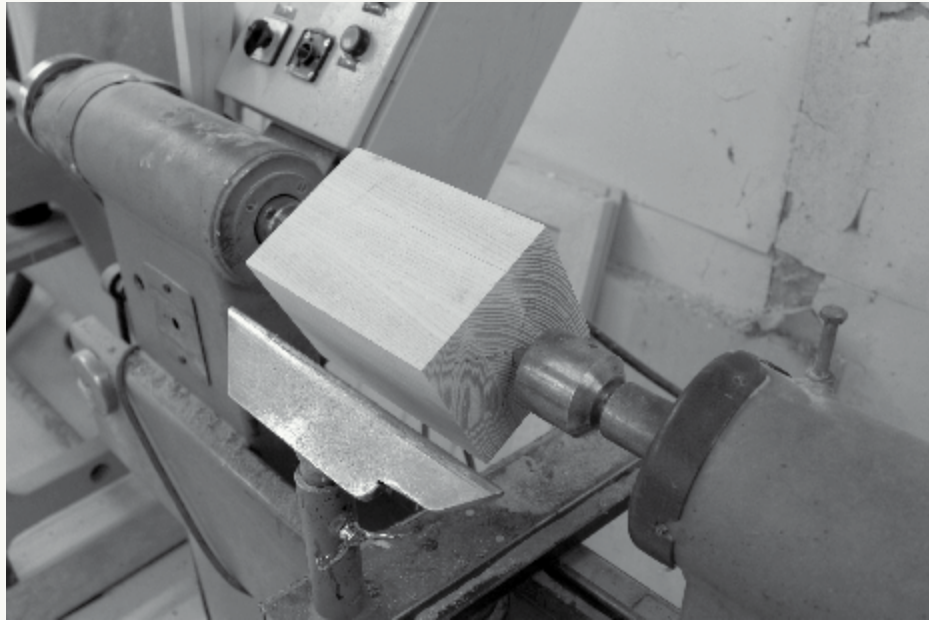


Fig. 65 & 66; Collin Velkoff turning the ash cylinder which is to become the body of the 'Tether' light.
 Fig. 67; The interior of the 'Tether' light body before it is assemble. Pictured are the lazy-susan bearings
 which are housed within.





Fig. 68; An assortment of both successful and unsuccessful plaster molds used in glass blowing.
Fig 69; The form of vase on the plaster wheel.







Fig. 70 & 71; The 'Threshold' rug in progress on the loom and a detail of the loom weights.

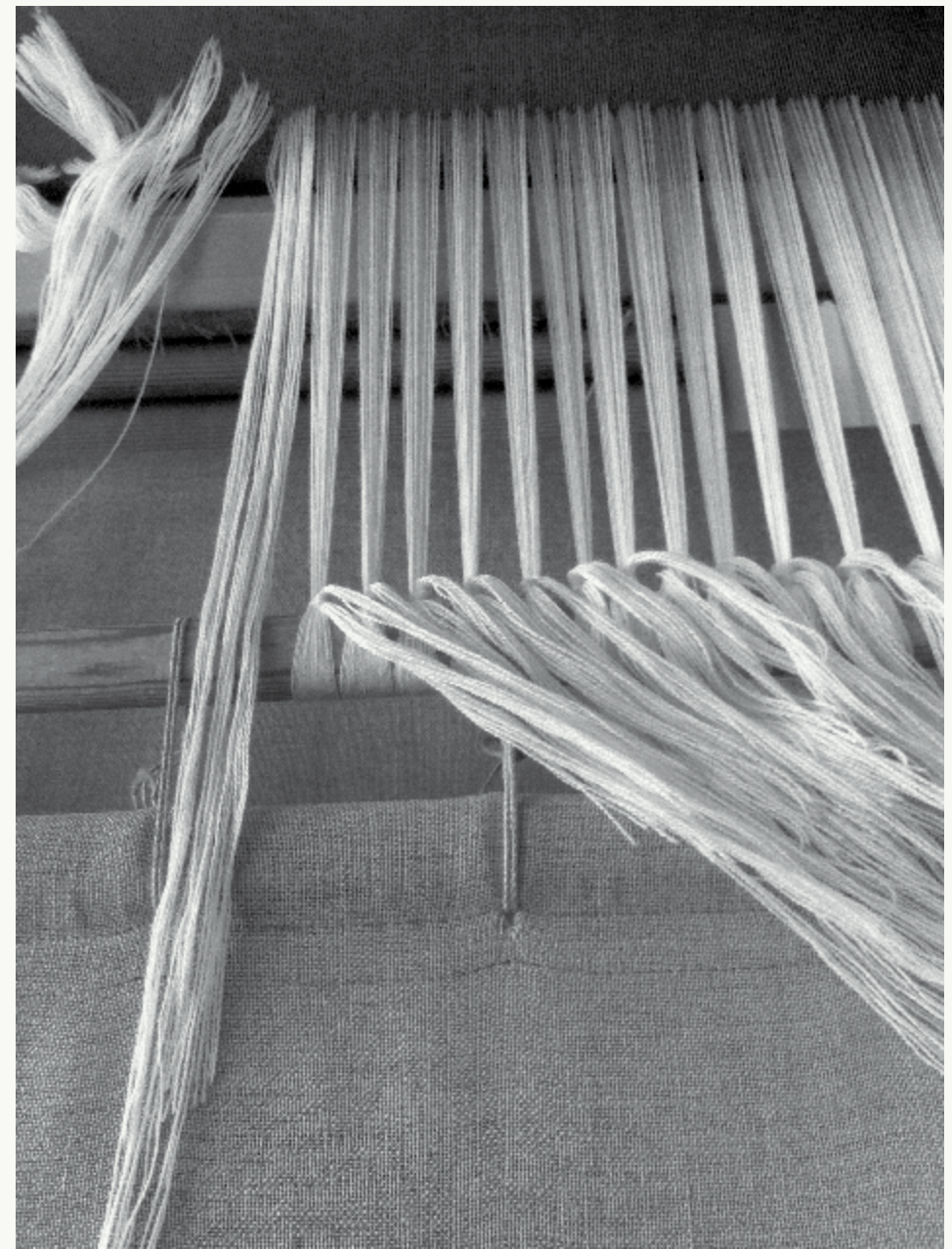


Fig. 72; Preparing the loom before beginning the rug.

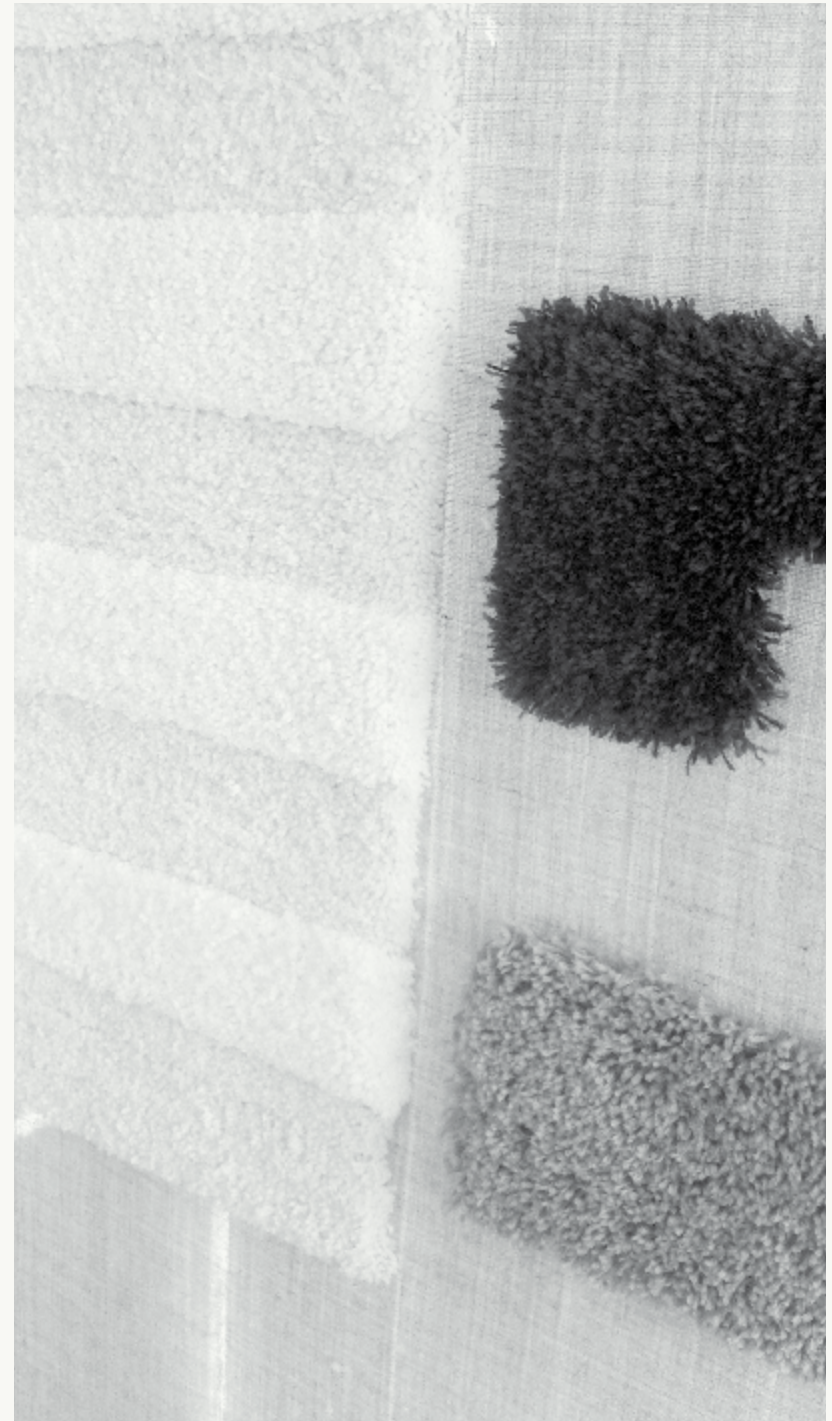
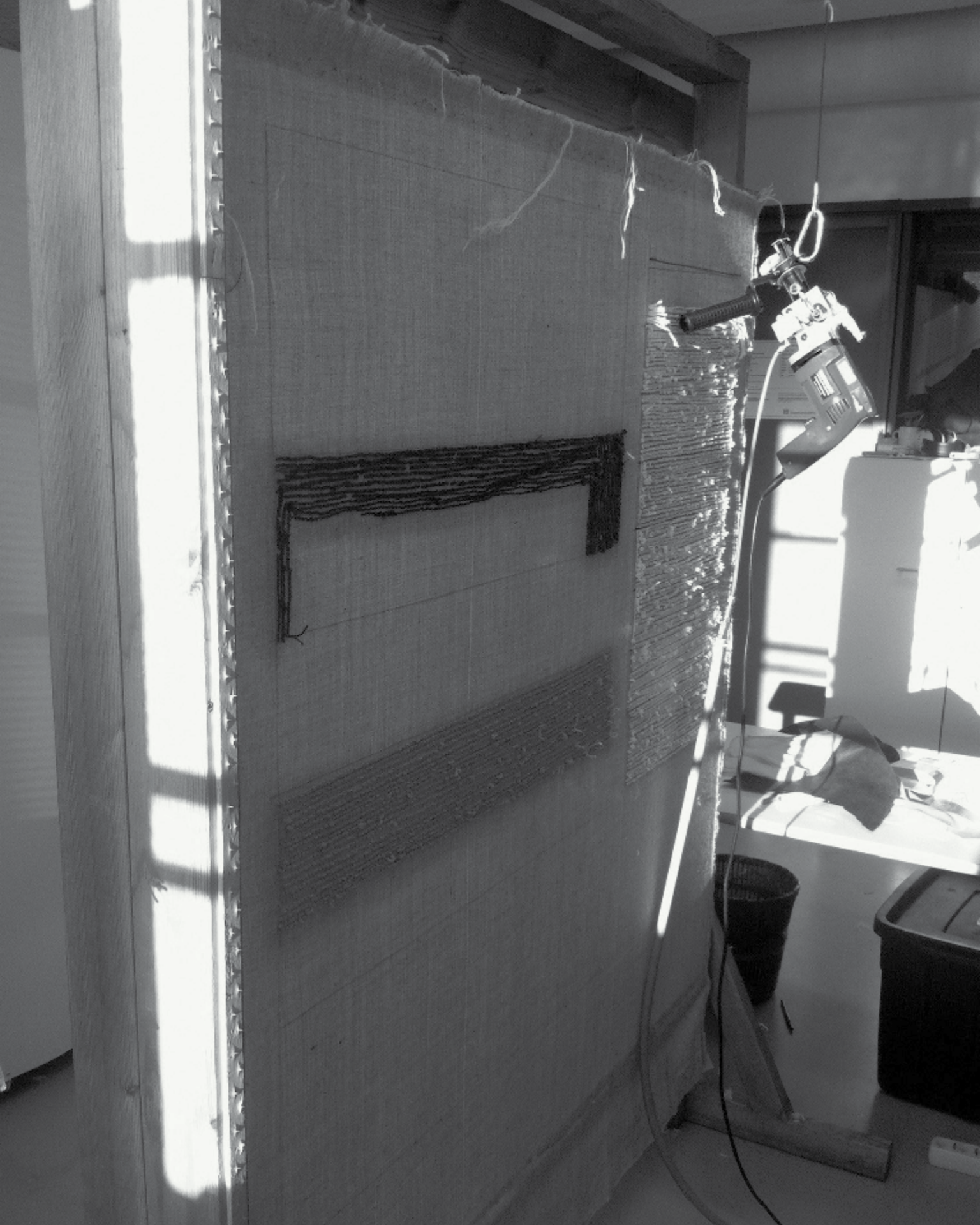


Fig. 73; The tufting gun and rug sections in progress on the frame.
Fig 74; Tufting sections completed.

CONCLUSION

The central motivation of this thesis was as a response to the changing nature and demands of our homes. Pico Ayer (2003) talks about the "great floating tribe". This huge (and rapidly increasing) tribe consists of the 220 million people now living outside their own countries. As discussed in this thesis, factors such as transport, communication and technology have created a more peripatetic and mobile human race. This change in how, and where, we live has greatly impacted our lifestyles, not least our homes. We are less static and are no longer rooted in one place, or tethered to one house as a lifelong home. This new reality was one that I felt deserved our attention as designers. The thesis discusses the implications of these changes on the idea of home as traditionally understood, and addresses how we might begin to alter our thinking about designing for the 'movable home'.

I began by looking at this 'traditional' idea of home. This is a deeply entrenched idea in our shared psyches. This 'collective thinking' is something that is not easily shifted and in a way the goal is rather to emulate it and to try to encapsulate it into a new package. The aim became to capture the feeling of home, in a movable form. In earlier chapters I concluded that home is "an intimate space (...) It is tied up with the personal: memory, identity and nostalgia." (Uhlemann, 2016). The feelings that we associate with home are of a profound sense of "warmth, safety, love, connection and nurturing" (2016). Home is also our most personal sphere, it is a physical place which represents our inner selves. It is where many of us feel that we can truly be ourselves, removed from the glare of the outside world.

Ilse Craford (2005) describes it as "a place that can help one recognize and remember one's identity" (p117) while Alain de Botton (2014) describes how we rely on our homes to remind us of who we are "We depend on our surroundings obliquely to embody the moods and ideas we respect and then to remind us of them. We look to our buildings to hold us, like a kind of psychological mold, to a helpful vision of ourselves." (p107).

The obvious solution, it seemed to me, was to work through objects rather than spaces. It is the case that as we move more freely, the spaces and places in which we dwell become more temporary. This means landlords, hotels, rentals, and consequently, loss of control over the shell of our dwelling. I began to think about the deeply connective power that objects can have and how they could be used to create a feeling of home that is "transportable but constant" (Uhlemann, 2016). We use objects to embody emotion, atmosphere and memories. I initiated an exploration into the thinking behind this, in order to assess its usefulness as a design tool in this context. Sherry Turkle provides valuable thought on the subject. In her 2011 book she states "Objects help us make our minds, reaching out to us to form active partnerships." (p6). Through association and memory, objects create feelings and emotions within us, which in turn can be used to create atmosphere and 'space'. It is the argument of this thesis, that the feelings evoked by objects can create a sort of 'space', practically independent of context. That is, we can gather objects which can travel with us through various spaces and in each space, can be used to create a 'home'. Objects serve as anchor points as we float through life, fighting against



Fig. 73; Some of the Places that I have called home.



Fig. 74; Mural in Co. Donegal, Ireland

the anonymity and smallness of being one of seven billion people on the planet. Home is “the winning throw of the dice which man has wrested from the uncanniness of universe; it is his defense against the chaos that threatens to invade him.” (Buber, 1969, p93)

I thought about how this might be achieved, and what was the best way to go about realising objects for this purpose. Objects, which might best provide the sensation of ‘at-home-ness’. I studied archetypal ‘home objects’ and decided to categorise them loosely into those that connect through atmosphere and those that connect through action. In this context atmosphere might also mean memory, nostalgia or emotion while action might also mean interaction or engagement. These served as useful parameters within which to work, providing a framework for my thinking. I identified four areas that I considered, through my research, as important to the feeling of home. These areas were; connection, atmosphere, identity and emotive memory or nostalgia. The goal was to create objects that triggered one or more of these requirements. These were my guidelines going into the idea generation stage.

My research had also provided a sense of the aesthetic associated with home. This informed my decisions in terms of the colours, scale and materials that I used. I focused on materials that are generally considered ‘more human’. That is, natural materials which are understandable to both the eye and the hand, matter that feels ancient and comfortable to both our modern and primordial selves. I used colours found in nature

for the same reason, sticking to a palette of yellow, brown, beige, cream and green. The outcome of the project was a collection of objects informed by my research. These included a ceiling light, a rug, a set of mirrors and a collection of display objects.

My hope is that these objects communicate the intention of my work; which was to provide an example of how objects can create a home that answers our need for connectedness and grounding through the use of simple home ‘triggers’. I aimed to illicit feelings of safety through a warm atmosphere, connectivity through personal reflection, emotional grounded-ness through nostalgia and memory and attachment through tactility and a sense of being removed from the outside world. This process has provided me with an altered thinking about how to approach designing objects. It has armed me with a much deeper consideration of context for the objects that I create in my future work. It remains my belief that the nature of home is changing and that it is incumbent on us as designers to respond to these changes. We have the power to create objects that improve people’s emotional well-being and quality of life, through the consideration of the effect our objects have on those who chose to live with them.

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Figure List

Acknowledgments

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FIGURE LIST

Images are taken by the author unless otherwise stated.

Figure 1. <http://theselby.com/galleries/drew-park-coffee-roaster-at-home-in-nashville/> Accessed 10th Sept' 2016

Figure 3. <http://www.roomido.com/einrichtungsbeispiele/ankleidezimmer.html> Photography by Studio Oink. Accessed 2nd Sept' 2016

Figure 5. <http://theselby.com/galleries/pablo-bronstein-artist-and-leo-boix-journalist-at-their-home-in-london/> Accessed 10th Sept' 2016

Figure 6. <http://www.design.katringreiling.com/index.php?/design/bidoun-sofas/> Accessed 3rd Sept' 2016

Figure 7-11. <http://theselby.com/galleries/> Accessed 10th Sept' 2016

Figure 12-13. <http://www.dezeen.com/2015/05/03/oma-fondazione-prada-art-centre-gold-leaf-cladding-wes-anderson-cafe-milan/> Accessed 5th Sept' 2016

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Figure 16. <http://www.dezeen.com/2015/07/22/naoto-fukasawa-minimal-kitchen-appliances-muji-toaster-kettle/> Accessed 16th Sept' 2016

Figure 17. <http://theselby.com/galleries/> Accessed 10th Sept' 2016

Figure 18. <http://www.nookshop.co.uk/collections/bathroom/products/body-brush> Accessed 2nd Sept' 2016

Figure 19. <http://rafa-kids.blogspot.ie/2014/06/studio-oink-new-studio.html> Accessed 2nd Sept' 2016

Figure 29-34. Placement Mirrors. Photography by Zoé Blanchard.

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Tony Bennett
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